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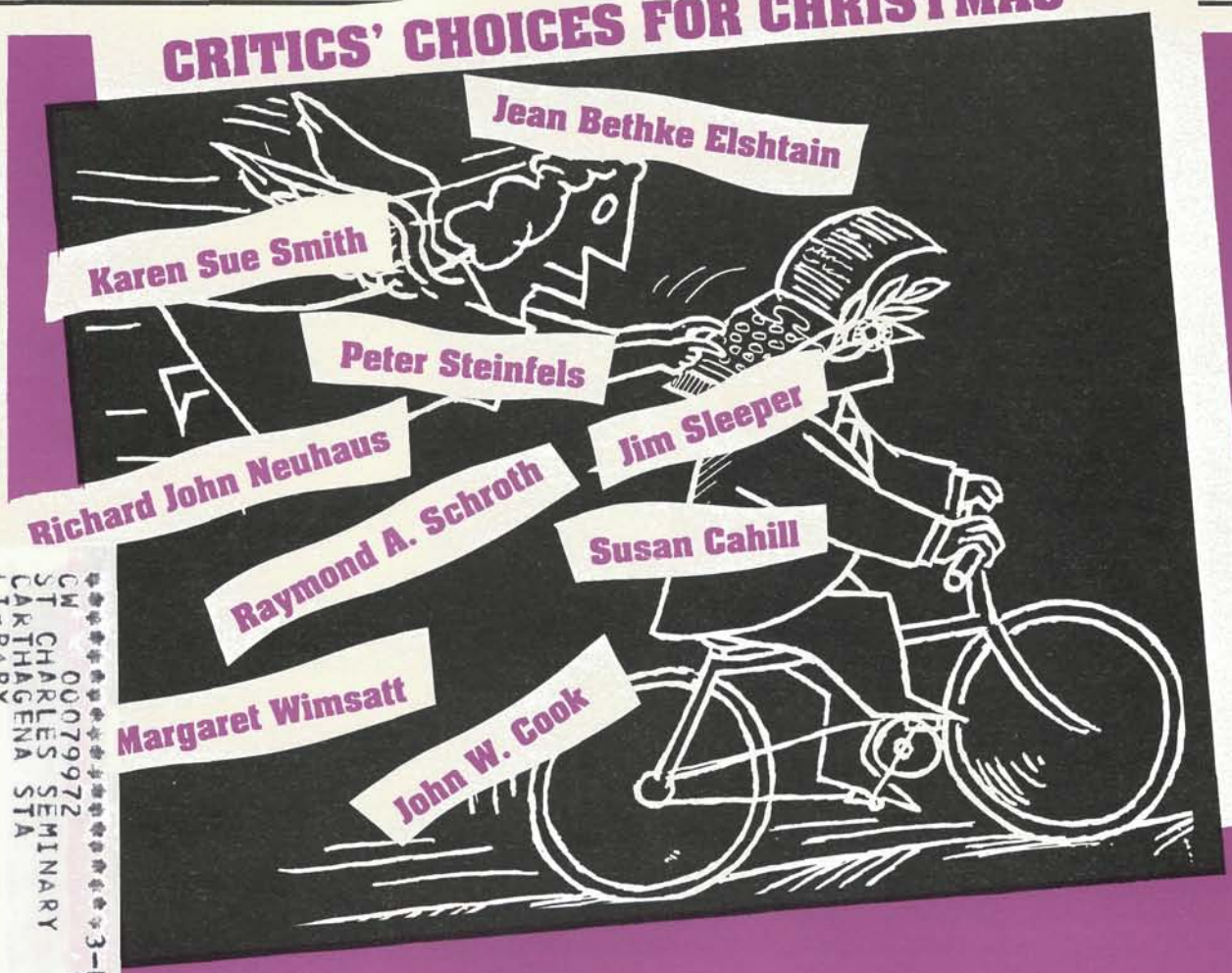

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WHAT THE U.S. BISHOPS SAID BEFORE THE COUNCIL
Joseph A. Komonchak

VATICAN II: 25 YEARS The Editors

CLAIMING THE BLUES FOR BLACKS ONLY Maureen Mullarkey

RERUM ANTIQUARUM

A NEW CATHOLIC PURGE • WAR, GENDER, SILENCE

REVIEWS:
RICHARD ALLEVA ON 'Miller's Crossing' and 'GoodFellas'
GERALD WEALES on 'Ninagawa Macbeth' and 'Gonza'
FRANK McCONNELL on Games people watch

CORRESPONDENCE: PAUL DINTER AND HIS CRITICS

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CORRESPONDENCE

'DISABLED FOR THE KINGDOM': Readers Respond

Brilliant, but wrong

Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.

To the Editors: Paul Dinter's article, "Disabled for the Kingdom" [October 12], was brilliantly written and offered insights into Scripture that must have been inspired. However, I do not agree with the author because that same Holy Spirit has the church legislating to the contrary of his thesis. What must be realized is that those who are called to practice celibacy are guaranteed supernatural assistance. It is the same with people involved in a sacramental marriage. Without a life of which prayer is an important daily feature, neither priest nor married can be faithful. Persons who are deprived, of their own free will, have to use that will to pray daily. Prayer is so easy to put aside or postpone, always for apparently good reasons.

REV. WILLIAM E. REISIG

The unexamined life

Calumet City, Ill.

To the Editors: As a religious of fifty-four years and a priest of forty-eight years, I can identify with Paul Dinter's scholarly analysis of celibacy. With the cultural revolution of the late 1960s and moving into the university area, where priests are simply treated as men on an equal footing with women, I came to a realization that religious life and priesthood had programmed me to live an unexamined, unhealthy life where human development is fixated at an adolescent level. With the help of friends I was able to see my disabilities and turn my life and ministry around to become a committed wounded healer.

I weep not for myself but for the church I love and to which I have dedicated my life. Our culture that sees sexuality as a positive force in human development is not going to reverse itself while the church is adamantly fixed in the dead past. A person can have a vocation to the priesthood, as to any other calling, at a very early age, but one is not able to make a commitment to a life style until reaching an adult stage of psychosexual development, which I would place at a minimum of twenty-five. Healthy young men are not going to enter a seminary that does not allow them to develop. They are not going to feign conformity to a church that is not credible in society.

The priesthood is at the core of the Catholic tradition because of the centrality of the Eucharist. We do not need a celibate male clergy. Lay people will become our successors. I have pushed for that all my life. The tragedy will be that the lay people will have no theological education or wide pastoral experience because the leadership refuses to invest even modest sums in their education, even a small fraction of the subsidy to seminaries. The theologically uneducated lay people who will replace us as pastors could make our local churches fundamentalist, bringing us back to the pre-Tridentine church. This can also happen by attracting to the seminary deeply flawed young men who could not make it in lay life.

DENNIS J. GEANEY, O.S.A.

No room for heroines?

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Paul Dinter's article on the real meaning of celibacy puts the case beautifully and meaningfully. Its honest assessment of the real heroism of a life against nature could, I should think, recruit more valid aspirants to the priesthood than any attempt to present celibacy as its own reward could possibly do.

To me the article is also the most persuasive argument for the ordination of women I have thus far read. That priests should be able to marry is one thing. Whether they can actually pull off this double role successfully is another. I doubt that marriage has ever been an easy vocation, but at least at one time it was the expected vocation, and social mores supported this acceptance. Today, since families that manage to remain families are usually nuclear, the burdens can seem overwhelming. Many times my husband has had to balance the obligations of the profession he loves against the obligations of the family he also loves, and, often, one or the other has had to give. But his work is, after all, an avocation. He has never been asked, as is a priest, to be all things to all men—and women, too.

Thus, it seems to me counter to both the truth of celibacy and the will of God to refuse priesthood to women who see themselves as called to accept that state. That they are quite as likely to transcend this disability, no one who has been well served by nuns can deny.

MARIAN BURKHART

A forced reading

Morristown, N.J.

To the Editors: Literary people, and especially literary people skilled in the interpretation of Scripture, often distinguish "exegesis" and "eisegesis." The first signifies an honest effort to interpret a word, phrase, or literary passage; the second

(Continued on page 734)

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COMMONWEAL

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Vatican II: 25 years

Twenty-five years have passed since the final session of Vatican II closed on December 8, 1965. The celebration of this anniversary has been muted, even somewhat neglected. Certainly it contrasts with the 1991 centenary of *Rerum novarum*, for which multiple preparations are under way. No one would question the importance of Leo XIII's encyclical as the starting point for the church's modern teaching on social justice. But the contrast between the two observances suggests that both papalists and social activists find it easier to agree on celebrating the achievements of the church's social teaching than for the Catholic church to unite around the council that raised hopes for renewal and reform but whose teachings are now mired in ecclesiological and theological disagreements. The people most stirred by Vatican II in 1965 and most devoted to implementing it thereafter have been put on the defensive by those who never accepted the council in the first place, and by those who, over time, redefined its agenda in minimalist terms. Histories of the council proceedings remind us of the fierce resistance in the curia to the thrust of the bishops' deliberations (in particular, the most recent, *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After*, ed., Adrian Hastings, Oxford). Studying that record today shows the degree to which that curial spirit survived and has been given new life by Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

On many fronts, then, there is cause for discouragement.

And yet, Catholics living through the before and after of Vatican II continue to feel and see its unprecedented influence. The decrees on liturgy and Scripture opened a new depth of understanding and a new level of practice in the lives of ordinary Catholics. Mass in the vernacular, the priest facing the people, and congregational participation enriched our understanding of the Eucharist. Popular and solid Scripture study programs have made serious Bible readers of Catholics, with the attendant effects on spiritual life and social action. The constitutions on the church and the church in the modern world have had a more complex pattern of implementation. But who can doubt that the greatly expanded influence of the church's social teaching and its acknowledged centrality in the life of the Christian draw their impetus from the opening paragraphs of *Gaudium et spes*: "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the [people] of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well."

That sentence capsulized the council's seismic shift from a church bringing its certainty and sacraments to save a God-deserted world to a church sharing both its grace and its weakness with a world in the travail of birth. The Catholic church today is less orderly, unified, stable, and confident than the church that John XXIII called to Rome in 1962. It is also holier, braver, more generous of heart, and more open of mind. It has metamorphosized from a church that had shown itself primarily concerned with securing its own institutional well-being to a church that, across

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the globe—in Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Philippines—has nurtured and sheltered some of the most courageous defenders of the human dignity that is God's image.

By 1962, the church of the 1950s was already feeling a foretaste of the focus that would come to be known, in the shorthand of decades, as "the Sixties," and, if the council had not taken place, the church would be desperately in need of convening one now. But even had the preconciliar church survived intact, it is unlikely it would have shaped the last quarter century to the extent that the church of Vatican II has done.

Certainly, looking back on twenty-five years, the difficulties, distractions, and misdirections are plain to see. Some follow from the top-down spirit in which reforms were initiated, some from the reluctance to go further in implementation, and some from cultural and economic shifts—the sexual revolution, third-world debt, cynicism about authority—that have had dramatic effects on the church as on the world. But there are other, perhaps more subtle, problems that escape attention and are part of the debilitating paralysis that mark this anniversary.

The ambiguity or silence of council documents on some questions has left a trail of half-finished reforms. A full and central role for the laity is assumed in the constitutions on the church and the church in the modern world, while the decree on the laity is weak tea. The conflict between these tendencies is reflected in the frustrated complaints of those lay people who have given time and energy to various pastoral councils and other "consultative" bodies, only to find that bishops and clergy still hold the real power, and that many hoard it jealously.

There are other, more egregious lapses to be found in council documents. In its endorsement of religious liberty and improved relations with other religions, the council hardly attended to the church's own past failings; in fact, these failings were often evaded. It was beyond the imaginative powers of the council fathers to express repentance for the millions killed, tortured, or spiritually maimed in the cause of spreading or preserving the "Word of God." Among those we must count Jews, Muslims, aboriginal peoples, dissenting Christians, and even faithful Catholics, lay and clerical, theologians and peasants. Remembrance engenders repentance which encourages restitution and true conversion. The change of practice the council mandated was not grounded in a full recognition of how badly the church itself at times had betrayed the law of love.

This failure to remember and to repent has permitted a certain arrogance and a muted sense of triumphalism to continue to have their corrosive effects on the church. Eyes can always turn to the Vatican for good examples. Its refusal to allow the University of Fribourg to award Archbishop Rembert Weakland an honorary degree (see p. 709) is only the most recent. Weakland's efforts to understand the views of those who disagree with the church's and his own views on abortion are apparently the immediate cause for the Vatican's action. It is silly. It is small-minded. It is mean. It is what comes from the church's failure to undergo a conversion of heart.

If the institutional church cannot remember its failures, reformers suffer another kind of forgetfulness, the inability to remember that the church has ever done any good. After twenty-five years some have left the church entirely; others hide out in small communities of bitterness ever ready to see the church as an oppressor and to ascribe the worst motives to official pronouncements and actions. Seeing the ways in which the church can be all too human an institution, too many liberals and progressives have forgotten that there have been Catholic communities and movements, ideas and actions that must be seen as Spirit-inspired, even small miracles—not the least of them John XXIII and the council he convened.

Twenty-five years after the council there are as many reasons for gratitude as for disappointment. Still, discouragements of the current moment ought to be the occasion for sober reflection. There is no going back on the council, yet we are stuck in fulfilling its agenda. The restorationists ultimately will have to face the issues of participation, collegiality, ecumenism that now perplex the reformers. The reformers in turn will have to deal more frankly than they have with questions of catechesis, doctrine, and the life of faith. Each side must turn from pursuing its own destructive course. On the one side, the theological and ecclesiological absolutes that grow not from our tradition but from the Vatican's idealized notion of the church, are at odds with the everyday experience and life of the church; however forcefully these claims are asserted they can only end in discrediting religious authority. On the other side, the psychological, if not explicit, rejection of tradition and of papal and episcopal authority among would-be reformers can only end in further drift and theological and liturgical illiteracy.

The future does not lie in some easy compromise of these two mistaken tendencies, but in the cultivation of a spirit of self-critical responsibility. We are all responsible for the life of the church, but none of us is all-knowing or all-seeing about how to carry on its mission. That recognition in all quarters would in itself constitute a small miracle, and a necessary one.

PRIORITY MAIL

The letters of Archbishops Roger Mahony and Daniel Pilarczyk to Secretary of State James Baker and President George Bush last month were more than First Class. They were Special Delivery, and represent a watershed event in the relationship between the U.S. hierarchy and Washington.

Neither letter will be remembered for the novelty of its content. Both were short and to the point; both relied heavily on the U.S. bishops' 1983 pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*. In that lengthy document, the bishops laid out the ethical principles by which Catholics are to assess and judge situations and actions which might lead to full-scale war. The Mahony and Pilarczyk letters, sent with the affirmation of the majority of the episcopal conference, apply the teachings of the 1983 letter to the present Gulf crisis. They do so with clarity and dispatch. Their intent is unmistakable: to apprise the administration that in the bishops' opinion there is no moral justification at this time for a U.S. shooting war in the Persian Gulf. The bishops counsel the U.S.

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and the UN to "stay the course of persistent, peaceful, and determined pressure against Iraq"; they warn that no offensive action should be undertaken before "all reasonable peaceful alternatives" have been pursued.

The bishops' respectful but critical objections, issued in advance of an impending conflict, indicate that they will no longer simply bless mobilization calls. This change is the result of the 1983 pastoral and its arduous composition process. According to David Hollenbach, (*Justice, Peace, and Human Rights*, Crossroad), the most significant development in the pastoral letter's teaching was its effort to relate the traditional Catholic just-war teaching to an ethic of nonviolence. The letter argued that both teachings "find their roots in the Christian theological tradition; each contributes to the full moral vision we need in pursuit of a human peace."

Ten years ago this month, David J. O'Brien wrote a commemorative article in these pages on Dorothy Day (d. November 29, 1980) and the implications of her life for the American Catholic church ("The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Day," December 19, 1980). O'Brien noted that history would judge Day not only on the merits of her faithfulness to a particular vision of the Catholic life, but on how the Catholic Worker movement, which was her life's work, would affect the landscape of American Catholicism. Ten years later, as the Mahony and Pilarczyk letters show, the moral teaching of the U.S. Catholic church on war and peace is qualitatively different from the view that prevailed at the time of Day's death. She would certainly not claim credit for that, much less take comfort from it. (As she said more than once, our society is a social disorder that makes for war. Writing in *Commonweal* to protest the Korean War [December 29, 1950], Day took up the contemporary-sounding argument that the war was being fought to protect our way of life: "We shall, of course, be called defeatists and appeasers. Nevertheless, I would say that our way of life, as we are living it, is not worth saving.") And when it came to the state of Catholic moral teaching on war and peace, Day would sometimes quote the aphorism of a Benedictine friend of hers: "The moral theology we are taught is to get us into heaven with scorched behinds."

The Catholic church in the U.S. is no longer willing to settle for a morality of scorched behinds. The Mahony and Pilarczyk letters have applied the strict criteria of the just-war theory to a real situation, and announced that war in the Persian Gulf would be morally illicit unless all elements of the moral norm had been satisfied, and all other avenues of resolution—particularly nonviolent means—had been exhausted. In 1990, the bishops are clear that not all such means have yet been tried. If we are to join them in living the challenge of peace, now is the time to deliver their message to Congress and the president, Registered Mail.

'RERUM ANTIQUARUM'

VATICAN TARGETS WEAKLAND

DISHONORING A FAITHFUL CHURCHMAN

Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee and formerly abbot general of the Benedictine order, is, in my judgment, one of the most intelligent, talented, and pastorally sensitive of all the hundreds of U.S. bishops, both living and dead, with whom I have been privileged to work in one capacity or another during my fifty years in the priesthood.

I first met Archbishop Weakland in Rome in the early 1970s while he was still serving as abbot general, but I got to know him then only casually. It was my great good fortune, however, to come to know him very well during the several years that he served with consummate skill and with great openness of mind and heart as chairman of the committee of bishops that drafted the U.S. bishops' pastoral on the economy. As one of the consultants to the committee, and as one who has worked with many other episcopal committees going all the way back to the middle 1940s, I consider him the best chairman I have ever seen in action. I would add that, in my opinion, the decision by Archbishop John Roach of Saint Paul-Minneapolis, the then president of NCCB/USCC, to appoint Weakland to serve as chairman of the committee on the pastoral on the economy, was providential. In short, I think he was the best qualified bishop in the entire American hierarchy to take on that difficult and demanding assignment.

Because I have such great admiration and respect for Archbishop Weakland, I was saddened—and, like many others, felt a sense of outrage—when I read in the *New York Times* (November 11, 1990) that the Vatican had barred the theology faculty of the University of Fribourg in Switzerland from granting him an honorary degree. The conferring of the degree was to have taken place at the opening ceremony of Fribourg's celebration of the forthcoming centenary of Pope Leo XIII's pioneering social encyclical, *Rerum novarum*. It was altogether fitting that Weakland, because of his skillful leadership in drafting the U.S. pastoral, should have been chosen to symbolize Fribourg's commitment to the great tradition of Catholic social

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teaching initiated by Leo XIII in 1891.

By barring the University of Fribourg from conferring an honorary degree on Archbishop Weakland, the Vatican, needless to say, has cast a shadow over the university's observance of the *Rerum novarum* anniversary. It has also compromised its own vaunted commitment to academic freedom as expressed in "From the Heart of the Church," the recent widely heralded document on Catholic colleges and universities. But more than that, and worst of all, it has unfairly damaged Archbishop Weakland's reputation as a faithful churchman and a committed champion of Catholic social teaching.

Press reports indicated that the Vatican blocked Archbishop Weakland's honorary degree, not because of his work on the U.S. pastoral, but rather on the grounds that his statements on abortion have caused "a great deal of confusion among the faithful." The Vatican has not revealed how it came to this conclusion, but it is clear that the authorities in Rome did not consult with or even contact Weakland himself about their concerns with regard to this matter. I share his publicly stated view that it is unfortunate, to say the very least, that they failed to do so.

There is no way of knowing whom the authorities at the Vatican did in fact consult and listen to, but, inevitably, the impression is abroad that they were overly influenced in their Fribourg decision by extremist elements in the right-to-life movement who have made no secret of their desire to "get" the archbishop at almost any cost, by fair means or foul.

I have recently had some personal experience with intemperate zealots of this type in connection with my measured efforts to persuade the national AFL-CIO to remain neutral on the abortion issue. In the end, the union federation did in fact adopt a position of neutrality, but no thanks to certain extremists in the right-to-life movement. By the sheer crudity and ineptitude of their bullying tactics—foolishly aimed at intimidating the AFL-CIO—they came close to pulling the rug out from under me and thus defeating their own cause.

My only purpose in recalling this episode in the context of the Fribourg controversy is to point out, in defense of Archbishop Weakland, that while the right-to-life movement, by and large, is filling a noble and absolutely indispensable role in trying to persuade the American people and our elected officials that abortion is a great moral evil, certain fringe and unrepresentative elements in the movement are woefully inept and at times almost viciously *ad hominem* in their choice of tactics.

I fear that the Vatican, in blocking Weakland's honorary degree, may have taken people of this ilk too seriously. Needless to say, I hope I am wrong about that, but, in any event, I must say again that I am saddened by the Vatican's decision to block Fribourg University from granting Weakland an honorary degree. He deserves better than that. In saying this, I am confident that I am speaking not only for myself but for a multitude of American Catholics who share my feelings of profound respect for this good and faithful servant of the church.

GEORGE G. HIGGINS

Msgr. George G. Higgins, adjunct lecturer in theology at Catholic University, was for years director of the social action department for the U.S. bishops' conference.

THE VATICAN'S LOYALTY OATH

VOUCHING FOR FIDELITY
AGAIN & AGAIN & AGAIN

At the very time that *glasnost* is working its way through the Soviet Union and most of Eastern Europe, Vatican officials have levied on pastors and theologians a revised Profession of Faith and an Oath of Fidelity, and forbidden the public airing of opinions that challenge official church teaching. Sensitive to this barrage of sanctions, which function collectively as a kind of McCarthyite loyalty oath, I find myself of three minds, each representing a different characteristic response I have been picking up from fellow Catholics.

Fifteen years ago, when I first began teaching courses in college theology at the University of San Francisco, an older Jesuit academician, not a theologian, approached me to acknowledge his eroding sense of solidarity with younger priests in our religious community. Nothing seemed certain any more, he said, even our shared belief that Christ is genuinely human and divine. I caught a whiff of the direction this conversation was taking, for he soon circled around politely to my own personal belief in Christ's divinity.

Let me describe the unusual overlay of attitudes this man's question evoked in me, for they mirror the three states of mind I want to explore later. First, I felt hurt and insulted that a colleague should doubt my orthodoxy. But then, I welcomed a chance to affirm and explain my faith. After all, donning the role of theologian does not automatically confer on a person the privilege of representing an official tradition with accuracy. This man had the undeniable duty to challenge me. So I began by answering his question with a simple "yes!" After this single word, he interrupted me with enthusiasm and expressed immediate relief and kinship. Only at this point did I really get angry. Was his question just another shallow California referendum—"Vote NO on abortion," as the placards read, or "YES on Proposition 23"? I argued that he had no warrant to solicit knee-jerk token reassurances, but must stretch his attention span for a careful definition of terms, a responsible awareness of implications.

More recently, my own first reactions, and those of many colleagues, on reading about the new loyalty oath were visceral. Instead of the gratitude and trust, perhaps a modest testimonial dinner, consonant with your lifetime of service, church leaders swoop down and strap you to a lie detector, probing outrageously for the missing silverware. Or imagine being pressured unexpectedly, after decades in a loving marriage, to vouch for your fidelity, again and again, through pledges that grow wordy, banal, and finally hypocritical. The combined Oath and Profession of Faith has now been imposed in several dioceses on those about to assume the appointment of bishop, clerical religious superior, deacon, seminary professor of theology and philosophy, or pastor,

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among others. A few months ago, a diocesan priest friend of mine, required to take the revised Oath of Fidelity before being named pastor of a large urban church, told me he must in conscience reject the oath and thus his long-cherished appointment. He insists that his previous record of loyalty speaks for itself and needs no reaffirmation.

I admire the decision of this priest, the forthright testimony of a Christian martyr, even though my own priorities in objection to the oath may sound less explicitly religious than his. Given a choice of death, I would prefer to sacrifice my life to save another person, or to die for a cause like human rights or nuclear disarmament than for some tendentious churchy formula. For I commit myself by faith, not to specific religious words, but to the ineffable God or Godhead through a flawed, finite medium of both words and action. I suspect that at least a few martyrs in early Rome, in Tudor England, or in Tokugawan Japan must have struggled with these same misgivings about mortal words or images, before settling on their final affirmations.

My second state of mind about the oath, however, after sounding out a wider range of opinions, has been a sort of disciplined reserve, earmark of the more seasoned theologian. Thomas More's biographers single out a decisive moment when his resourceful legal mind sifts through the newly imposed Oath of Supremacy, eager to salvage a minimalist literal reading that can satisfy both conscience and King Henry. Similarly, the fine print in the present Oath of Fidelity and Profession of Faith, and in the more recent "Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian," all issued by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), merits the most exacting scrutiny. The combined profession and oath calls not only for faith in infallible doctrine, but also for a "religious submission of will and intellect," toward "whatever is expressed by the holy shepherds as authentic doctors and teachers of the faith, or established by them as the church's rulers." In a parallel controversial clause, this submission (*obsequium*) is expected toward authentic teachings "even if [church leaders] intend to proclaim them with a non-definitive act."

At first examination, the scope of this pledge in its present form seems recklessly vague and broad. It lacks the requisite nuances pervading even the pope's more recent "Constitution on Catholic Universities," which demands from theologians "an assent to Catholic doctrine according to the degree of authority with which it is taught." The CDF oath, on the contrary, angling for an undiscriminating belief in anything or everything, risks settling for belief in nothing. A slavish maximalist interpretation of these words could stifle honest scholarship, ecumenical collaboration, the church's doctrinal development, and its indispensable thermostat of prophecy. It could shape docile minds into a blank check, expected to cover some Kafkaesque memo inserted next Wednesday for instant belief. If summoned to do so, I could only violate my conscience and intellectual integrity by taking the oath as I now read it. Yet a colleague has assured me she would recite the requisite words, but only after adding a mental proviso: "I shall adhere to these official teachings with whatever assent the whole church intends." Another friend often urges me to recognize limitations of culture and temperament, and train myself to trim down CDF rhetoric to the dimensions of a Roman traffic signal, treated by most Italian drivers not as a command but as a request.

I have already implied a third state of mind about the loyalty oath, but in my own consciousness, this attitude survives as just a faint atavistic impulse from adolescence. Though I can barely resuscitate these feelings now, they must surely provide the basis for any empathy I feel today for traditionalist and papal integralist members of my own Roman Catholic family. In high school geometry class, I once experienced an instant of sublime certainty, as the intellect passed with strict logic from proposition twelve to thirteen. Also, in first-year college I delighted in confuting imaginary adversaries by rattling off scriptural proof texts or Thomistic arguments for the existence of God. Thus, I feel a glimmer of affinity now with the relief experienced by some Catholics at this long-overdue "return to orthodoxy," terminating an interlude of religious mayhem unleashed by Vatican II.

Long before the 1960s, most Catholics, myself included, had learned to prize our church for its tough discipline and uniformity, its disdain for whatever proclaimed itself the latest worldly modernity. Though I grew away from these people, they have persisted, sitting out the last few decades of *aggiornamento*, impatient for the restoration of Counter-Reformation certainties, just as many tough old Leninists must be counting today on the brevity of their *glasnost* nightmare. Recall the indignant reply of Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, when asked why he did not become Protestant after leaving the Catholic church: "What kind of liberation would that be, to forsake an absurdity which is logical and coherent, and to embrace one which is illogical and incoherent?" In a *Daily Express* column of 1930, Evelyn Waugh explains his reasons for conversion to Rome—first of all, its competent church organization and discipline, its clear consistent teaching. It provides the most rigorous alternative to the chaos of the Communist or Fascist modern state. The Anglican church, on the contrary, is absurdly indecisive. "If its own mind is not made up, it can hardly hope to withstand disorder from the outside....Any kind of crankiness or individual self-assertion in the ministers of a religious body shakes one's confidence in them." Almost a century before this, John Henry Newman offered a similar argument: "There are two alternatives, the way to Rome and the way to atheism. Anglicanism is the halfway house on the one side, and liberalism is the halfway house on the other."

Now I cannot but respect convictions so fearless and white-hot, especially in our own culture of affable pluralism, often no more than window-dressing for religious lassitude and anti-intellectualism. But what is so contemptible about a spiritual halfway house? The distaste expressed by these visionaries for compromise and provisional religious insight goes too far. It smacks of a neurotic hankering for absolutes, for Apollonian clarity and logic, an inability to handle ambiguity and mystery, perhaps a failure of nerve. I think this is the style of thinking William James grasped incisively in his distinction between those

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minds primarily shut to error and those primarily open to truth. The first group prefer to believe nothing without clear compelling evidence, rather than risk being duped. The second group are willing to risk being duped again and again, rather than postpone indefinitely the chance of an accurate guess. Placing himself in the latter set, James observes that after all, our errors are not such dreadfully solemn things. Yet precisely this detestation of error and muddle is the militant *raison d'être* of the CDF, just as this attitude animates the fundamentalist reactions today in almost all world religions. Compare, for instance, the temperament and bullying tactics surfacing in three contemporary conservative usurpations of church power: the Vatican of John Paul II, the Lutheran Missouri Synod, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

A façade of doctrinal coherence and tidy hierarchical efficiency, major endowments of the church romanticized by Newman and Waugh, have been purchased, I fear, at an ugly price. I can remember the day I first lost my naive patriotic trust—a delayed maturity, I am ashamed to admit. It occurred the instant Eisenhower admitted our State Department had been lying about U-2s flying over Soviet territory. In a similar dramatic moment, I lost my ecclesiastical innocence during the first public debates among prelates at Vatican II, especially in evident back-room tradeoffs and crusty ward politics. For what dresses itself up as a serene doctrinal consensus, inspired by the Holy Spirit, might have emerged from lobbying and power plays no less fallible or sinful than those in our own Congress and Supreme Court. For example, papal court-watchers gossip today about the slapdash manner in which the present texts of the Oath of Fidelity and the Profession of Faith first appeared. With no explicit papal approval, no apparent consultation, they were issued retroactively to beat a deadline from the previous year, a date after which all Vatican edicts were supposed to undergo scrutiny by a special commission.

Even in a post-Leninist era, I am convinced that any religious loyalty worthy of the name must survive a bracing Marxist dialectical critique. As the *Communist Manifesto* asserts, our particular notions of freedom, culture, and law, which we presume to be eternal laws of nature and reason, actually spring from preconceptions held by a specific current ruling elite. "Your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will whose essential character and direction are determined by the economical conditions of your existence as a class." Now it is no secret that Cardinal Ratzinger's CDF and other neo-Catholics have been colliding repeatedly with third-world liberation theologians. The latter often dismiss most Eurocentric theology as the self-serving projection of a secure academic elite, often male, celibate, bourgeois, cosmopolitan, insulated from rural poverty. Yet the church's current leaders seem blind to this kind of critique, and to the relativity of their own power base. In its "Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian," for instance, the CDF cautions dissenting individuals against recourse to the mass media or public opinion polls. "Standards of conduct, appropriate to civil society or the workings of a democracy, cannot be purely and simply applied to the church. Even less can relationships within the church be inspired by the mentality of the world around it."

On the contrary, the Vatican today is managed for the moment by a specific church clique, trying to shape the rest of the church according to its own predilections, no doubt fervent and well-intentioned. Their dream-church strikes me as a neo-Platonic essence, wiped clean of earthy civil politics. But I think its actual civil reality operates, not like a democracy, of course, but like a Renaissance autocracy—and a very Machiavellian one. Yet neither of these historical civil models should be mistaken for the embryonic church of the New Testament. More accurately, as we can learn from the tyrannical abuse of parliamentary procedure in any democracy, what counts most in church politics is the person who predetermines the agendum, stacks subcommittees, redistributes minor offices, or edits and publishes the final text. And the present loyalty oath, I am convinced, represents just one more fallible political maneuver to impose a one-sided partisan version of Catholic faith on the entire church.

VERNON RULAND

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OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

WAR, GENDER, SILENCE

WOMEN TOO CAN BE WIMPS

Two hundred thousand more American troops are on their way to the Gulf. With them go the tanks and the artillery suited to a land war. Frustrated soldiers already in Saudi Arabia wave at the TV cameras saying, "Let's get it over with—take him (Saddam) out and go home"—apparently oblivious to the likelihood that they and tens of thousands of their fellows might go home in body bags if we do attack Iraqi forces massed across the border. Despite growing opposition in Congress to the build-up and stirrings in the peace movement, George Bush, according to news reports, believes that he has the authority to go to war under the UN Charter.

I sit here wondering if nations must have combat and if, no matter how absurd the reasons, they will always choose war over peace. In such a context I wonder, too, if I can rejoice over the election this week of a smart and capable woman, Sharon Pratt Dixon, to be mayor of the city we call the capital of the free world. Or should I be glad that a woman, Mary Robinson, has been at long last elected president of strife-torn Ireland. My basic question, of course, is this: Have women political leaders made

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any difference in getting governments to focus on the human needs of their peoples? Have they helped to advance the cause of peace? Have they—in a word—acted any differently than men? Why are the voices of women in power not raised on behalf of those 18- and 19-year-olds so likely to be sacrificed in the Gulf?

Individual women without the responsibility of power are, to be sure, quick to question the terrible cost of war, especially those who have seen it up close. On Veterans' Day, three women veterans who served as nurses in Vietnam visited the Washington war memorial. When questioned about the Mideast crisis, they were uncompromisingly blunt in speaking of the anguish of Vietnam. A former army nurse, Judy Herrington, whose memories of Vietnam come flooding back in nightmares, sees a connection to the young men and women sent to Saudi Arabia, "I'm scared to death for them." These nurses thought it "sick" that so many of the children of Vietnam veterans are in the Saudi desert or on their way there. And they expressed skepticism of any objective except that of protecting oil supplies (*Washington Post*, November 11). They shared the sense of columnist Dorothy Gilliam that they were on a runaway train.

To be sure, there have been calls for a halt to the build-up, but they have not come from women of influence or their organizations. No prominent feminist has been heard on the Gulf, nor have women's organizations other than peace or religious ones raised a cautionary word. In fact, the National Organization for Women (NOW) at its September board meeting, passed resolutions calling for equal treatment of military women being sent to the Gulf, but did not question the president's action in sending troops. "We do have a standing peace resolution," said a spokesperson vaguely, "passed some time in the 1970s." There seems to have been no recent allusion to this resolution.

The point was brought home to me forcefully in talking with women from abroad attending an International Women's Media Foundation conference. They were struck by the apparently passive acceptance by U.S. women media stars of the prospect of war. "They seem to take it for granted," said Mary Holland, political columnist for the *Irish Times*. "Individually some are concerned, but don't seem to think they can do anything about it—or should. The American media women who made the conference possible, were so wonderful and seemed so powerful and to have such rich resources that I was shocked to discover that they felt impotent about shaping the agenda of their society. In comparison, media women from the emerging countries and Eastern Europe felt that they could influence what happened in their communities and that they had a responsibility to do so. The Americans seemed helpless in the face of the headlong rush to war, the trivialization of the news, and the commercial bias of the media." Wanting to be hopeful about her hosts, Holland detected in the last days of the conference that the American women were beginning to be emboldened by the example of the media women from the emerging countries. And indeed I thought I glimpsed a change in coverage as for example when Judy Woodruff interviewed the mother of a marine killed in Lebanon about her views on the Gulf.

It will probably take a great deal, however, to alter the perspective of these American women. Some of them, of course, may have given careful thought to their support for U.S. actions in the Gulf. But it seems more likely to me that women who have risen to positions of influence in a male-dominated government or media either have done so because they share the prevailing views or because they have taken on the attitudes of their male peers. For TV that means an attitude of the detached, uninvolved spectator—often a jesting one. Women's organizations are no better. Although they may have standing resolutions, they seem to have no idea of how to affect international policy, or even whether they should.

This seems in striking contrast to the Catholic bishops, who were largely silent on Vietnam, but who have moved to the forefront of protest by raising questions about a military solution to the Gulf crisis. Archbishop Roger Mahony, chair of the USCC's International Policy Committee, in a letter to Secretary of State James Baker, wrote, "My concern is that the pressure to use military force may grow as the pursuit of nonviolent options almost inevitably becomes difficult, complex and slow...." The bishops affirmed that letter at their annual meeting. Women and their organizations might well study how the bishops, once mute on matters of war and peace, have found a voice. Surely the majority of the population—nurturers, mothers, responsible citizens—must want to find theirs. □

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WHAT THEY SAID BEFORE THE COUNCIL

HOW THE U.S. BISHOPS ENVISIONED VATICAN II

JOSEPH A. KOMONCHAK

Pope John XXIII had been in office less than one hundred days when he announced Vatican II on January 25, 1959, an act by which he was to become a transitional pope in a more significant sense than was probably in the minds of those who elected him at the age of seventy-eight. The nature of the transition the council effected is at the heart of the battle currently underway over the interpretation and evaluation of the council today and its reception. For some the transition was epochal, the sort of shift described when people speak of the end of the Constantinian era or the close of the age of Christendom. For others this interpretation overlooks the elements of continuity in a council that never intended to produce a revolution in the church.

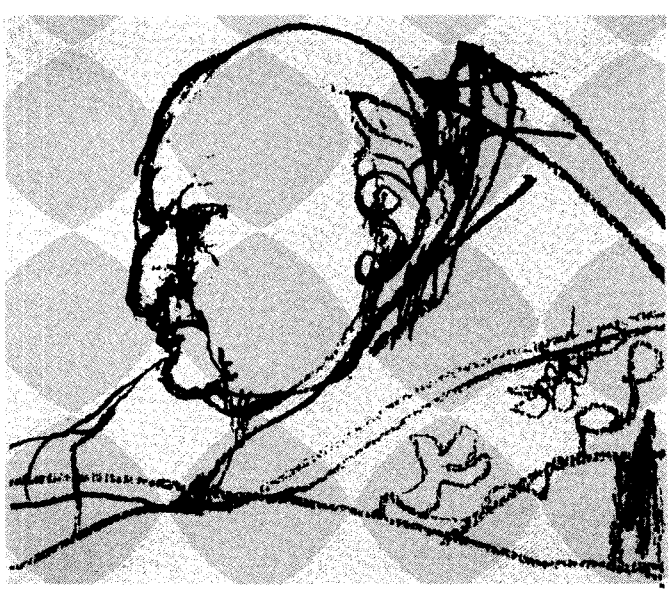
One way out of this, at times, ideological impasse is a careful historical analysis of the state of the various local churches when the preparation of the council began. A piece of the evidence needed for such study is the collection of proposals sent by the U.S. bishops in 1959-60 in response to the Vatican's request for their advice about an agenda for the council. The Antepreparatory Commission appointed to set the council's agenda decided not to send out a detailed questionnaire but to leave the bishops free to submit proposals on doctrine, discipline, church activities, contemporary challenges, and anything else they thought appropriate.

The U.S. bishops responded generously. All but 19 of the 136 residential bishops replied (86 percent; 93 percent when you exclude ten dioceses that had a change of bishops in 1959-60). Of 80 titular bishops, 32 replied (40 percent). Fifteen bishops wrote to say that they had no proposals to make. Most social scientists would be content to receive as full a reply to a survey.

The U.S. responses take up nearly two hundred and fifty pages in the official Vatican tome published in 1960. The longest reply was Archbishop Joseph Rummel's ten-page text; seven other bishops sent five pages or more. The vast majority of the texts were of two pages or less. Most of the replies were discursive in style, but some were very schematic, little more than lists of topics. The replies sent by Albert Meyer (Chicago), Paul Schulte (Indianapolis), Rummel and L. Abel Caillouet (New Orleans), William Brady (St. Paul), Leo Binz (Dubuque), Richard Cushing (Boston), John Patrick Cody (Kansas City-St. Joseph), Ernest Primeau (Manchester), and Aldoph Marx (aux., Corpus Christi) stand out from the rest for the breadth of their vision and their alertness to contemporary conditions.

Cardinal Domenico Tardini, secretary of state under John XXIII, had told the bishops they could consult "expert and prudent churchmen [*viri*]," and it appears that most did so, although much remains to be discovered about the breadth of consultation and the process of drafting. Although a few claimed to know what their people thought, no bishop said he consulted lay people.

There was no nationwide collaboration among the bishops in the preparation of their proposals. At the national meetings of U.S. bishops in 1959 and 1960, proposals for a collective response were turned down. The U.S. bishops would not begin to act collectively with regard to the council until the early days of the first session. This lack of corporate sense is also evident



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in the fact that only one bishop, John O'Hara of Philadelphia, even uses the word "college" and that the only mention of episcopal conferences is from Egidio Vagnozzi, the apostolic delegate!

Even more surprising are the apparent lack of regional or provincial collaboration and the absence of local or regional concerns. Only seven bishops referred to specific problems in their own dioceses and fewer still to any regional concerns. None of the bishops of the Southwest, to take an example, mentioned the fact that so many of their people were Mexican-Americans. For the most part, if one did not know the identity of a bishop and his diocese, one would never guess it from the content of his text.

Generalizations are difficult, first, because of the huge number of topics suggested, which range from the reform of nuns' habits, permission for priests to carry the sacred oils in their cars, and the existence of extraterrestrial creatures to restatements of central doctrines, dealing with racism, nuclear war, and religious freedom. Some bishops passed easily from one category to another. John Mitty (San Francisco) wanted the council both to address the split between private and public morality and to issue a dogmatic definition of the objective reality of hellfire. Wendelin Nold's (Galveston-Houston) call for a discussion of just war theory is preceded by concerns about using abstract art in churches.

There was also a good deal of variety in the implied agenda of the council. Most of the bishops included both doctrinal and practical issues, a third discussed only the latter, some of them appearing to see the council simply as a means for reforming canon law, and nine of them spoke only of doctrine. Almost two-thirds of the bishops confined their proposals to matters affecting the internal life of the church and said nothing about challenges facing the church because of economic, social, political, or cultural conditions.

Almost all of the bishops who commented on it welcomed the announcement of the council. Most of these emphasized the ecumenical purpose that was so prominent in Pope John's early statements. A few concentrated on the need to reaffirm or to clarify doctrine in order to meet a spreading indifferentism, secularism, and materialism. Only Jerome Hannan (Scranton) saw no need for disciplinary change or doctrinal clarification and promised to oppose at least radical innovations.

On internal church matters there was a broad range of concerns. Doctrinally, there was an impressive amount of interest in a richer ecclesiology, stressing the church's organic and spiritual dimensions, validating the roles of lay people, and increasing the authority of the local bishop. Reservations about contemporary theology were rare. Contrary to popular opinion and perhaps surprising the leaders of the liturgical movement, there was a great deal of support for the reform of worship, covering nearly every dimension of it and including the introduction of English. Only five bishops expressed some cautions about the liturgical movement. Priests received a great deal of attention, under twenty-plus headings: the reform and translation of the breviary, the lack of vocations, the reform of seminary training, the status of priests who left the ministry, etc. Sixteen bishops were in favor of restoring the diaconate as an active ministry. There was a very large number of calls for reform of the church's marriage legislation.

To avoid anachronistic evaluations, it may help to place the comments about external challenges in the context of a series of controversies that enlivened the American church in the 1950s.

One of the liveliest concerned church-state relations and the question of religious freedom. The silencing of John Courtney Murray had attempted to put an end to a bitter controversy over the issues among theologians. It was kept alive, however, by a series of public controversies that often pitted Catholic bishops against Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (POAU). Drawing on the most extreme representatives of the alleged Catholic "thesis," the POAU regularly opposed as threats to American democracy the efforts of the bishops to secure state aid for the children in parochial schools, to oppose the spread of birth control, and to defend certain forms of censorship. The tension was exacerbated when the POAU demanded special scrutiny be given to Catholic candidates, this shortly after John F. Kennedy announced his presidential candidacy.

Thirty-six of the U.S. bishops (24.3 percent) included the issue of church and state and religious freedom in their letters to Rome. Even most of the general comments asked for attention to the special conditions facing the church in a pluralistic society. Karl Alter (Cincinnati), who had long defended Murray, basically repeated his argument for the religious neutrality of the state. Paul Schulte (Indianapolis) borrowed his distinction between the philosophy underlying the French Revolution and that supporting the U.S. Constitution. Bernard Flanagan (Worcester) noted the difficulties caused Catholic candidates by the traditional thesis. Three bishops argued the need to rethink or at least reformulate the doctrine of the "Syllabus of Errors." Only Thomas Boland (Newark) posed the issue in the terms used by Murray's critics. If others did not raise the question, it may have been by deliberate decision, as in the case of Cardinal Francis Spellman, who was advised not to mention it for fear that Rome would confirm the more extreme view.

The tensions caused by the church-state controversy and by the antics of the POAU (which itself heaped scorn on "brotherhooders"), help to explain why ecumenism was not a major concern of American Catholics in the 1950s. In 1956 Reinhold Niebuhr remarked that "the relations between Catholics and Protestants in this country are a scandal and an offense against Christian charity." A 1948 instruction of the Vatican Holy Office was interpreted in the United States as discouraging ecumenical activities, and although it had called for establishing regional and diocesan offices to direct the effort at reunion, none appears to have been established. The pioneers of ecumenical activity in this country, such as Gustave Weigel, John Sheerin, and George Tavard, received little episcopal support.

It is a surprise, then, not only that forty-eight U.S. bishops discussed ecumenism but that forty of them did so quite positively. Thirteen of them cited Pope John's ecumenical intentions, and

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several noted that this goal had been enthusiastically welcomed in and outside their churches. Six of them spoke of reunion as the primary goal or most important task of the council. This sudden surge in ecumenical interest on the part of the U.S. bishops can only be explained, it seems, by the example and the urgings of Pope John himself. When it began to seem that ecumenism was being downplayed in favor of the purely internal goals of the council, Bishop Francis Schenk (Crookston) wrote a vigorous letter of protest.

There were other views, of course. Five bishops saw little prospect of Christian unity, except perhaps with the Orthodox. James McIntyre (Los Angeles) described the corruption of the faith among most Protestant leaders and denied that disciplinary concessions would have a positive effect on them. Peter Bartholome (St. Cloud) said that "in the U.S.A. this unity cannot be realized without a miracle of grace."

Common to both groups of bishops was a view of ecumenical unity as the return of schismatics and heretics to the one true church of Christ. Ernest Primeau (Manchester), Leo Binz (Dubuque), and Daniel Feeney (Portland), however, had a broader view, which included the need for genuine dialogue among the churches. Several bishops asked for the establishment of permanent ecumenical offices at all levels of church life.

The ecumenical question also affected some of the doctrinal issues raised by bishops. If some wanted to clarify the adage, "outside the church no salvation," in order to oppose a tendency toward indifferentism, others wanted discussion of the salvation of non-Catholics (three referring to the case of Fr. Leonard Feeney, whose extremes on this question led to his excommunication). Although a majority of those who raised the issue wanted new Marian definitions, several bishops warned they would have fatal consequences for ecumenism. Many bishops asked also for a clarification of Catholic teaching on the relationships between Scripture, tradition, and magisterium. Finally, several bishops wanted a consideration of the problems of daily contacts with non-Catholics, including the question of shared worship.

Few things seemed to obsess the U.S. bishops during the 1950s more than the threat of communism. Senator Joseph McCarthy's efforts were still a fresh memory, the cold war was at its most frigid, and the bishops had vigorously condemned Communist persecution of the church no fewer than five times in the decade. In this light the number of bishops who mentioned communism is surprisingly small: only twenty of them (13.5 percent). Several of the references are general or oblique; but Cody warned against Communist efforts to divide the faithful from the hierarchy, particularly by trying to exploit the race question. Others asked the council to respond doctrinally, by emphasizing Original Sin and our supernatural destiny. Three bishops wanted expressions of support for persecuted Catholics. All in all, a quieter consideration of the topic than might have been expected.

In the late 1950s the issue of race was about to explode in the U.S., and it was being felt in the church particularly over the question of the integration of Catholic institutions. In 1956 a poll of southern Catholics found 75 percent of them in favor of segregated schools, in 1959 the vast majority of Catholic schools in the South were still segregated, and in 1957 a few New Orleans Catholics had appealed to Pius XII against Archbishop Rummel's prophetic statements.

Statistically, the number of bishops who mention the question of racism in their proposals to Rome is very small: twelve of them (8.1 percent), five from Northern dioceses, six from Southern, and O'Boyle of Washington. Requests came from the bishops of Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, which had seen large increases in the numbers of blacks. Lengthy and eloquent statements were made by Rummel and his auxiliary, Caillouet. Why the other bishops did not mention the problem is not easy to answer. Indifference can certainly be ruled out in the cases of bishops such as Spellman, Robert Lucey, Joseph Ritter, Vincent Waters, and Paul Hallinan who had already taken strong stands against segregation. In their cases, as presumably in others, the answer must lie in their view as to what was appropriate material for a council.

Finally, given the immense commitment which the U.S. bishops had made to the construction of the system of Catholic schools, the controversy over governmental aid, and the controversy caused by John Tracy Ellis's 1956 article, "American Catholics and the Intellectual Life," it is surprising that only fifteen bishops (10.1 percent) mention Catholic education, that only three of them refer to the question of the church's rights in the area, and that higher education occurs in only four texts, only one of which seems to echo Ellis's concerns.

There is a common view that the U.S. bishops went to the council in 1962 quite unprepared for and surprised by what happened. Perhaps it is necessary to nuance that judgment in the light of their proposals for the council. There is only one reply to Rome that appears to question the need for the council to consider any changes in discipline or in the formulation of doctrine. Some bishops, it is true, thought only of tinkering with contemporary attitudes, activity, or institutions. But an impressive number were willing to propose more extensive changes, if not in doctrine, at least in the way it is presented, and if not in the church's fundamental constitution, at least in the way it functions pastorally. If none of the bishops was a revolutionary, a good number could be considered reformists.

Between 1960, when the last of the proposals was sent to Rome, and 1962, when the council opened, some forty-three U.S. bishops would serve on preparatory commissions. The proposals of the worldwide episcopate were filtered to these commissions through a classical grid borrowed from the manuals of theology and the Code of Canon Law, which did not always adequately represent the sorts of suggestions made nor the arguments and passions with which some of them were proposed. Most of these, and particularly the Theological Commission, were carefully controlled by curial interests. On the eve of the council, it was not at all certain that the initial proposals for reform had much chance of winning the day. Hans Küng's question, "Can the Council Fail?" was being asked widely.

Hence the drama of the council's first session. Within days it became clear that a majority of the council were in favor of real reform in the church, and among them the U.S. bishops,

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including some whose proposals of two years earlier had been very cautious. The new spirit created by the early days of Pope John's pontificate, visible already in the sudden interest of U.S. bishops in liturgical reform and ecumenical sensitivity, was now strengthened as the bishops of the world assumed a new and unique collegial responsibility. If the council itself went farther and more deeply than any of the bishops had anticipated two years earlier, it was not a complete surprise to many of them, nor a development that, given the proper charismatic inspiration, they did not welcome and embrace. □

CLAIMING THE BLUES FOR BLACKS ONLY

OR, PINNING THE TAIL ON WHITE FOLKS

MAUREEN MULLARKEY

In a 1920 address to the NAACP, James Weldon Johnson, Afro-America's senior statesman at the time, announced that although the white race excelled in gathering and applying knowledge, "it has never contributed one single element of what goes into modern civilization." It was the African, he claimed, who brought distinction to American culture through the vitality of his music. Civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois agreed. In 1924, the year after Leon Trotsky published his influential *Literature and Revolution*, Du Bois published *The Gift of Black Folk* which declared the Negro "primarily an artist" and insisted that "the blood of the Negro" revealed itself in the arts. Consistent with the prevailing posture of intellectuals in his day, Du Bois announced himself a Bolshevik and asserted his contempt for any art not used for propaganda. Here began promotion of the arts as a necessary means to recognition and power for African-Americans.

The paradox of power built on commitment to an irreducible cultural identity is that it cannot avoid mimicking the racism it presumes to combat. The racial preening, disdain for whites, and reductionist view of culture implicit in Johnson's theorem provided just the right *frisson* for the affluent white "Negrotarians" (Zora Neale Hurston's sly coinage) who encouraged and helped finance the Harlem Renaissance. Since then, these have become dangerous cards in the unsavory game of racial politics. The willingness of the Studio Museum in Harlem to use them signals the acceptability of a euphemized racism in which ethnic cultural identity is the ground for prejudices as noxious as the old colonial ones. The museum's current exhibition, "The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism," is slender and lackluster. It is notable mainly as a replay of Du Bois's Trotskyite emphasis on the political utility of art. A modulated effort to mythologize racial differences, it comes uneasily close to a *völkisch* theorizing that would be discredited if it issued from a white institution.

Curated by Richard Powell, a Yale graduate with degrees in Afro-American studies and art history, the exhibit is a prop for the accompanying catalogue. This, in turn, is a collection of essays commemorating the blues—less as music than as stimulus for a cultural separatism that not only recognizes racial differences but requires them. Up to a point, it offers a legitimate celebration of black artistry. Beyond that, the effort sours with racial one-upmanship and antagonism that contravene the very thing that is the glory of fine blues: its power to communicate across racial lines.

The catalogue (*The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism*, $19.95, 104 pp.) maintains that black artists and black culture have had a major impact on the modernist tradition. Since this can be argued more plausibly in popular music than in the visual arts, the text ignores modernism and sidesteps art as soon as it can. Instead, it proposes a "blues aesthetic" that claims to "color a vast and graying ocean of Western tradition." African-Americans are "the aesthetic incarnate." Retaining sympathy with "the metaphysical powers of sound (music)," they are the "most creative, culture-building people in America." In short, blacks *do* have rhythm and you better believe it.

MAUREEN MULLARKEY *is a painter who writes on art and culture.*

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The scholarly veneer comes unglued in the bad-ass set piece by Jeffrey Stewart, teacher of history at George Mason University. Opening with a gratuitous jab at "racist Euro-Americans" (inexplicably coupled with "rioting Chinese") and a swipe at white males, he rejects all suggestion that the blues might be the hybrid product of "some transcultural inheritance of racist proportions." They are solely the language of oppression in "this belly of racist capitalism." There *is* something "quintessentially black" about the blues. Reviving a grievance buried in the Jazz Age, Stewart complains that "black expressiveness must be covered over with white icing" to be acceptable. This does not jibe with the boast by Kellie Jones, visual arts director at the Jamaica Arts Center in Queens, New York, that "African-American aesthetics rule popular culture." But no matter. The real agenda here is pinning the tail on white folks.

A crossbreeding of African melody and rhythm with harmonically oriented tune and meter (especially as these are present in hymns and marches), the blues have complex roots. There are parallels and prototypes in British folk tradition, in the mountain music of Appalachia and the Scottish Highlands. "Frankie and Johnny" and related boll weevil ballads, for instance, are a tangle of British, American, and African sources. The crucial significance of the blues, *lingua franca* for the pain of living, lies in its testimony to the inevitable reciprocity of cultures beneath the surface of political events. This is not good news to the cultural separatist whose *idée fixe* is the preservation of exquisite difference. Hence, the stress on race as the linchpin of the blues. The admitted subject here is "the politics of the blues; the blues as social condition." Or, in the curator's phrase, "the blues as cultural ethos."

While Powell voices discomfort with the implications of an aesthetic built on race, the weight of the catalogue tips the other way. Powell subverts his own concern by contending that black *style* (the hairdos, the duds) is power. E. Ethelbert Miller, director of Howard University's Afro-American Resource Center, plays to the same grandstand. He calls blues the African-American's "first line of defense" and tips his hat to Public Enemy, the rap group whose anti-Semitism has raised alarms. Miller affirms Stephen Henderson's definition of the blues as a collective realization that "we had to give up all to be like THEM" in this "parasitic" and "cannibalistic" country. In a dextrous bit of doublespeak, Dwight Andrews, ethnomusicologist at Emory University, denies the validity of race as the basis for an aesthetic "while simultaneously asserting the necessity of keeping racism in the paradigm." In the shadow of Andrews's balancing act lurks the fraudulent assumption that racism is a white phenomenon.

Blues musician John Cephas is virtually alone in transcending the *Nationalkultur* bias that dominates the text. With the modesty of an artist loyal to his craft ("Musicians seldom speak of an aesthetic as such"), Cephas resists bending his art into a triggering device for the politics of blame. His warm witness locates the blues in the oral black tradition and acknowledges their shared qualities with other types of vocal and instrumental music. Born in the black community, blues can be played by anyone of any color who feels it: "There's so much history in it, but it's also an American tradition and belongs to all of us." The other essays are closer to Langston Hughes's lament, quoted by Miller, that whites had taken the blues and "fixed 'em/so they don't sound like me." Overall, the text dogmatizes what was once called the "Negro difference," recalling the poeticized hyperethnicism of 1939 statements by Leopold Senghor, first president of Senegal: "Emotion is Black, just as reason is Hellenic."

What does this have to do with the art on view? It keeps the audience from noticing that the black imprint on the visual arts is considerably less than the impact of modernism on black culture. The origins of the quest for a black aesthetic are intimately bound to the crisis of values affecting blacks and whites alike in the wake of World War I. Modernism's unapologetic energy for provocation and experimentation, its schemes for political and cultural renewal, its disillusion with traditional symbols of civilization created the vogue for *negritude* that animated the Harlem Renaissance. The centrifugal forces of the modernist temper yielded the era and its works. Any serious inquiry into modernism and its fragmentations would raise questions about an aesthetic tainted at birth by its ideological correspondence with other grand racial theories of this century. But modernism in this context is just a word, like art and the blues, for hanging claims on.

There are some lovely pieces in this show by both black and white artists: Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, George Luks, Aaron Douglas, Artheur Dove, and Miguel Covarrubias. There is also plenty of trendy flotsam. The aesthetic divide has nothing to do with race but much to do with expertise and informed sensibilities. What is good and enduring here is almost exclusively by older artists who had the good luck to be spared the dispensations of the contemporary market. The rest is typical American Art Industry: regulation outré (see the white dog castrate the black man in Keith Haring's cartoon elegy for Malcolm X), mixed media eruptions or awkward commonplaces chosen for their subject matter. The mawkish portrait of Aretha Franklin,

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with her ventricles on her chest like the Sacred Heart, is only one reminder of Bearden's old charge against the white philanthropists at the Harmon Foundation: that they encouraged blacks to adopt "artificial and corrupt" standards.

A single piece by Wifredo Lam, the stunning Cuban synthesizer of Afro-Antillean and modernist imagery, would have been more to the point. But the curator is not that interested in art, so Lam is unwisely excluded. Hobbled by the equation of ethnic with primitive, the show as a whole does not withstand comparison with the work of Bearden and Lawrence. Each of these technically articulate, gifted men transcended a separate-but-equal black aesthetic. The social content of their art is the more compelling because it is expressed through luminous mastery of form and materials and empowered by rigorous understanding of the *longue durée* of pictorial traditions. Drawn to art by the beauty of classical African sculpture, Lawrence was deeply influenced by the social realism of the Mexican muralists, particularly Orozco. Early on, he embraced Orozco's approach to content and plastic form as well as his compositional rhythms and accents. Later, at Black Mountain College, cradle of the avant garde, came the great shaping influence of Josef Alber's Bauhaus design principles. But Powell ignores Lawrence's development to publicize his art as simply "an authentic depiction of blues style."

Bearden, who considered himself a Cubist, is similarly narrowed. His achievement is proclaimed " a vehicle that was and is the blues." Used this way, the blues can mean anything at all. By omitting reference to Bearden's passionate study of the Florentine masters, Rembrandt, Picasso, Mondrian, Miró, and his own contemporary Stuart Davis, Powell obscures the rich wellsprings of Bearden's sophistication.

Stretching evidence to fit the polemic, Powell jumbles means with causes and oversimplifies the differences between music and visual art. The vocabulary of music—color, tempo, rhythm—provides analogies for talk about painting. Nevertheless, it is misleading to confuse a useful conceit with the structure and origin of an artwork. In a triumph of cliché over substance, Powell dubs Jackson Pollack a "blues aesthetician," spiritual kin to jazz innovator Charlie Parker. Why Pollack and not the equally innovative Gorky or de Kooning? Because the legendary action painter listened to blues while he worked. Yet Pollack, an indiscriminate culture enthusiast, listened to everything. From opera and Stravinsky to Bach and Beethoven, if it was music he loved it. (Pollack felt himself kin to Schumann.) He inspired himself with much more than jazz: Zen calligraphy, Jungian theory, Indian sand painting, El Greco, the example of Arshile Gorky. And he studied the moderns in depth. By seizing the popular image of Pollack as a furious expressionist, Powell disregards the extraordinary control and calculated delicacy (Pollack frequently retouched his drips with a brush) that is the hallmark of his best work. The refinement of his execution once led William Rubin to compare him to Debussy!

Powell's facile appropriation misses the subtler but truer link between Pollack and Parker. Each in his way testifies that every significant innovation is a function of nourishing gestation in the long continuities of art history and other realities. (The turning point in Parker's musical development came when he began

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studying and memorizing the recorded improvisations of Lester Young. Thank you, Thomas Edison.) In accounting for the work of other white painters strictly in terms of an inspirational blues aesthetic, Powell's arguments are equally truncated. He chooses not to grapple with the hard fact that every Western artist, black or white, is heir to pictorial possibilities that are rooted in the precedents set by the granddaddies of modernist art: Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, and later Picasso. This holds true as well for jazz aficionados Stuart Davis and Arthur Dove. For artists *as artists*, the first great syncopator, chromatic poet of dislocation and fragmentation, and riff improvisor was Paul Cézanne.

It is legitimate to ask who benefits by an aesthetic milled from half-truths, dismissiveness toward Western traditions, and the tired, dysfunctional myth of the black artist as an instinctual innocent outside the mainstream and exempt from judgment by it. Certainly, it has not been the growing number of African-American youth who consider mainstream achievement a "white" thing. Neither is it those of us, black and white, who still believe that social justice is mediated upon those things that assert our commonality and prepare us for our shared destiny in a global culture and economy. Perhaps the only beneficiary is the black mandarinate, the small middle-class subgroup of academics and bureaucrats who define and administer their own apparatus of racial division.

"The Blues Aesthetic: Black Culture and Modernism" remains on view at the Studio Museum until December 30, the last stop on a tour that began in Washington, D.C. It was funded by the Ford Motor Company. The catalogue is available from the museum, 144 W. 125 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10027. □

SCREEN

BADFELLAS

'MILLER'S CROSSING' & 'GOODFELLAS'

Two new gangster movies, *Miller's Crossing* and *GoodFellas*, each has a virtuosic scene in which the camera follows the action through corridors, around corners, into a succession of rooms, down flights of steps. Both scenes are stunts designed to wow the viewer. Each scene reveals the level of ambition of each movie. The *Miller's Crossing* sequence is nothing but a stunt, while the long tracking shot in *GoodFellas* contributes to what the entire movie does; it takes you to a place on the American map which, though it really exists, might as well be labeled *Here Be Monsters*.

In *Miller's Crossing*, gangster boss Albert Finney punches aide-de-camp and former friend Gabriel Byrne through every room of a two-story hotel. (Byrne has just revealed that he's slept with Finney's inamorata.) As filmed, the beating makes no sense in any respect: physically (Byrne emerges without a bruise on his face), psychologically (Finney's character is the sort who would take vengeance on a traitor with tears running down his face and cries of rage on his lips, not with impassivity), or dramatically (this public beating establishes Byrne's credibility with Finney's enemies, but we don't see Byrne arranging for the attack to be public; it just happens by serendipity).

And so goes the entire movie. The Coen brothers (director Joel and writer-producer Ethan) have taken Dashiell Hammett's excellent crime novel, *The Glass Key*, exchanged its tense, logical action for gory special effects, dissolved its grimy urban poetry with overblown photography and forgettable sets, and substituted cheap ethnic stereotypes for Hammett's cruelly veracious characterizations.

It's been years since I read *The Glass Key* but I still remember its description of the way a goon's jacket bunched up between his shoulders as he bent over a prostrated enemy and prepared to break his neck. That one image conveyed more horror than the scene in *Miller's Crossing* in which torrents of blood gush from a man's eyes when he's struck in the face with a fireplace shovel. Disgusting, but it sure rivets your attention. And that's all the Coens care about. They don't care if their images reverberate in the viewer's mind once the initial shock wears off. They don't care if people remember their movies or not. The Coens are nothing but professional time wasters. You pay your seven dollars at the box office and the brothers kill two hours of your life.

Now, about that tracking shot in *GoodFellas*: Young gangster Henry Hill (Ray Liotta) is taking a middle-class Jewish girl (Lorraine Bracco) out on their first serious date. Bringing her to an expensive night club, he steers her past the long line outside and through a side entrance. "It's quicker this way." She's somewhat abashed. Won't they get thrown out? Going down some steps, Liotta greets some of the club's personnel. They know him. Down and around the couple go through an underground passageway and down and around the camera tracks with them...through corridors.... "Hi, Henry. How ya doing?"...into the club itself where all the waiters know him and where a table instantly materializes despite the lack of reservation. And just behind the couple are some very heavy looking gents and very flashy women who smile and wave and press flesh and who probably also got into this club without a reservation and found themselves seated at tables that also instantly materialized.

Henry, his date decides, is a catch. It's nice to be with a gangster. This illusion, so impossible for most of us to entertain, seems fully justified to the girl because of the way she has been whirled by Henry into luxury and convenience. And, for the moment, the illusion seems fully justified to us, too, because director Martin Scorsese and his tracking, twisting, gliding camera have whirled us along with the girl. While the Coens use tricks to keep the jaded viewer watching (and leave him more jaded than before), Scorsese uses tricks to crack open realities that would otherwise be closed to us. After seeing *GoodFellas*, you will understand why a young man would want to be a gangster, and you will understand why a woman would want to be married to one. That's the peculiar but undeniable feat of the first forty-five

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minutes of this movie.

Because the eleven-year-old boy Henry Hill runs important errands for the neighborhood gang, the smiling thugs fill his pockets with money and make his problems disappear. If his school sends letters to his parents warning them that Henry is truant, the thugs intimidate the mailman into pocketing those messages. If local thugs are more powerful than a division of the U.S. government, why not run with the thugs? And if your hardworking Irish father and honest Italian mother seem perpetually careworn and depressed while the local fixer Paulie (Paul Sorvino's superb characterization) carries himself like a king, why not be like a king?

The chief difference between this movie and other gangster films like *The Godfather* is the lack here of even spurious honor among these thieves. When Henry's mentor Jimmy Conway (Robert De Niro) brings off a spectacular heist at JFK airport, he cautions his gang not to display too much wealth too soon for fear that the police will take notice. But when the underlings nevertheless start splurging, Jimmy starts killing them. The men haven't really betrayed him or overtly questioned his authority. Even their display of wealth wasn't especially dangerous considering the flashy life these gangsters have always led. No gangster code has been clearly trespassed; no rules broken. But Jimmy is both greedy and paranoid, so the slaughter begins and the dead men's shares are confiscated by Jimmy. Once Henry feels his life is in jeopardy, he turns Jimmy and Paulie in.

This part of the movie grows logically enough out of the earlier ebullient scenes. Henry saw the rewards of a gangster's life and enlisted; now he sees the personal threat and leaves. It's a little too cut-and-dried to be truly dramatic. And, in the course of the movie, we have been gradually shut out of Henry's consciousness, so that the sense of discovery that we got from the earlier scenes is lost. The boy Henry drew us in; he is one of us; we too might commit crimes if crime were absolutely the only thing that could give us a purchase on joy. But the adult Henry, though less monstrous than his fellows, has too shallow a nature for us to experience the downfall of the gang through his eyes. This is partly the fault of Ray Liotta's rather threadbare performance that never holds the attention as Joe Pesci's pit bull ferocity or Robert De Niro's volcanic rage do. De Niro and Pesci play monsters whose consciousness we can't enter either, but they are glittering monsters whom we watch with fascination from afar. When De Niro smashes a telephone and then overturns the phone booth, he commands the attention that wild beasts always get. But Liotta's Henry, slightly twitchy, slightly dismayed as bodies fall to either side of him, is merely a passive monster.

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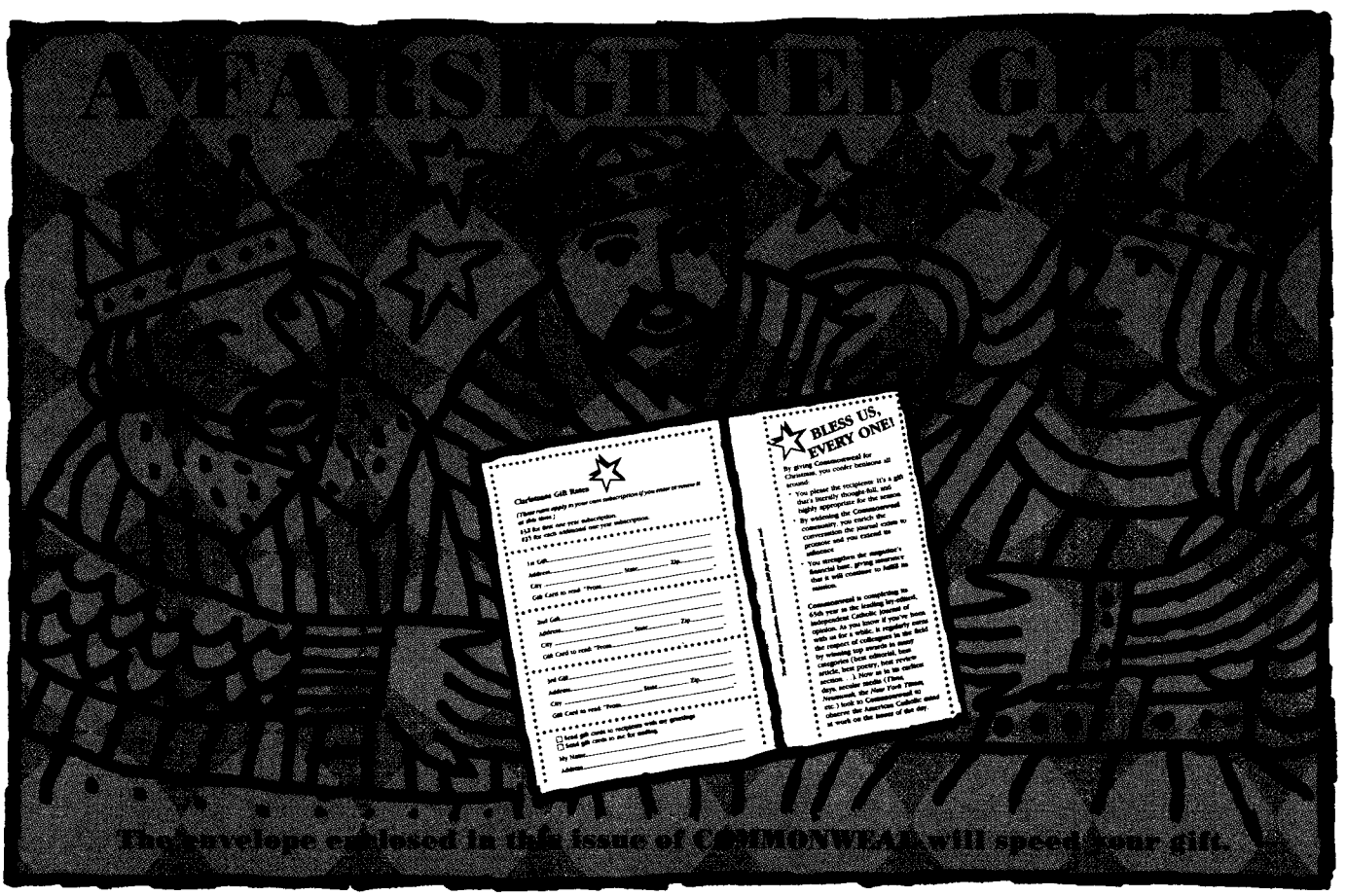

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Passive monsters don't make good protagonists.

But though the adult Henry may be uninteresting, *GoodFellas* never is. Scorsese and his superb editor, Thelma Schoonmaker, scoop out of each scene just what they need to reveal its point: the significant dialogue out of a welter of ad libs, the lethal glance, the supplicating gesture. On a recent PBS documentary about Scorsese, the filming of a scene near the movie's beginning was shown. A wounded man running down a street eventually collapses in a store where the child Henry helps him. Scorsese patiently showed his actor how to vary his run with various collisions against garbage cans, etc. The scene threatened to be overlong, bloody yet plodding. How many times would we have to watch the guy fall? Yet, in the finished movie, all we get is the briefest of shots of the man's flight followed by the curtest indication of the boy bringing succor. What could have been a wallow in blood was cut down to a necessary and vivid glimpse of pain and pity. In their economies, Scorsese and Schoonmaker are true artists.

But I wish Scorsese would choose a protagonist with a sensibility as alive as his own. Watching *GoodFellas* is like seeing Horowitz succeed in playing the piano while wearing a straitjacket. It's quite a stunt but you keep wondering when he's going to take the damn thing off. RICHARD ALLEVA

STAGE

PITFALLS OF AMBITION

'NINAGAWA MACBETH' & 'GONZA'

When Yukio Ninagawa's production of *Medea* played at the Delacorte in Central Park in 1986, the director solved a problem that I have with the Euripides play. At the end, when a dragon-drawn chariot is supposed to carry Medea off into the sky, earlier productions I have seen settled for letting the actress deliver her final lines from a rooftop and then obscuring the actual ascent. Ninagawa's Medea spoke her piece from a chariot of sorts, and then began to rise—up and up and incredibly up—until she disappeared into the summer sky over Central Park. By the time my rational mind had begun to work enough to tell me that the actress was riding a cherry picker, the image had done its work. There is nothing in the *Ninagawa Macbeth* (the director's name has become part of the title) as exciting, as flamboyantly right as the end of *Medea*, but the recent production at the BAM Next Wave Festival showed once again that Ninagawa is a master of stage picture, of theatrical effect.

The director has moved *Macbeth* to sixteenth-century Japan and has forested Birnam Wood with cherry trees, but he has not—as Kurosawa did in his 1957 movie *Throne of Blood*—rewritten the play to fit his own theatrical agenda. What he is after, as a program note says, is "a particular period or place that concentrates on the dark areas of human nature." I did not listen to Faubion Bower's simultaneous translation, but it seemed to me that the production stuck to Shakespeare, scene by scene, line by line. It did not engender a great deal of audience emotion, but then the play seldom does in English. *Lear* can break your heart, but *Macbeth* is too obviously a come-uppance tragedy for that, a suspense drama that depends on fulfilling the ambiguous prophecies of the witches; the best that Macbeth can offer the audience is his almost playful determination to go down fighting a battle that he knows is lost. Masane Tsukayama's Macbeth has a couple of strong emotional scenes and Komaki Kurihara's Lady Macbeth has the most athletic sleepwalking scene I can remember (she even rolls down a flight of steps), but it is not the characters, however well played, that make the *Ninagawa Macbeth* so effective. It is the look of the piece.

Let me give just two examples. The witches first appear, visible through a curtain, ornately costumed as though they were cousins to a lion-hearted figure from Kabuki and moving to a properly demonic choreography; they are approached by Macbeth and Banquo on horseback for no reason except that Ninagawa sees the theatrical value of vaudeville horses not played for laughs. The battle scenes—conventionally boring in most productions—are a delight here, full of acrobatic tricks that turn the battlefield into a deadly playground. There is a ludicrous edge to all this when Macbeth, like Douglas Fairbanks or Bob Hope in *Monsieur Beaucaire*, holds off a platoon of assailants or when a murderer at Macduff's castle does a complete somersault in the air before he plunges a pike into the ragdoll baby. My descriptions may make all this sound like the guying of *Macbeth*, but even when Ninagawa's choices seem the most outrageous, the play remains Shakespeare's tragedy.

While the real Shakespeare was being translated at BAM, Chikamatsu (sometimes called the Japanese Shakespeare) was being transformed at the Public Theater. David Greenspan introduces his production of *Gonza the Lancer* with a monologue by way of prologue, an odd and oddly appealing piece of his own in which pronouns run amuck without completely killing the possibility of sense. I cannot see what it has to do with Chikamatsu's eighteenth-century puppet play, but there is a great deal going on at the Public that does not seem particularly Chikamatsu, but which is no less enjoyable for all that.

Gonza, as the Narrator says at the beginning of the play, is "so good-looking people acclaim him in song." But he is a cool and calculating young samurai who is willing to do almost anything—desert the young woman he has seduced, marry for advancement—to get ahead in a samurai-eat-samurai world. As Donald Keene says in his introduction to *Major Plays of Chikamatsu*, Gonza is an unlikely hero, like the villains of Chikamatsu's other domestic tragedies. Through a series of accidents, Gonza is presumed to have committed adultery with his master's wife, and the two of them are forced to flee together; having made the false accusations true, they wander until the wronged Ichinoshin has a chance to kill them, restoring honor all around. Gonza, who has been manipulative at the beginning,

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self-pitying later, regains his fame and his name when—like Macbeth—he goes down fighting.

Greenspan sticks to the Chikamatsu text, in Keene's translation, but he has his cast speak with a deliberateness that underlines the artificiality of the story, already established by the Narrator. Beyond that, he uses sexual and racial cross-casting and mixes swords of the period with contemporary dress and props. Perhaps he thinks a man in a woman's role or a very blonde Japanese woman or a picnic thermos as a keg for sake is in some way a workable gloss on puppets as flesh-and-blood people. He uses puppets as well, a whole figure for the son of Osai, the runaway woman; one of her daughters is a doll's head on a walking stick and later the two daughters become a wine glass and a napkin. The action—even when some of the characters are props—usually follows the narrative, but sometimes it works by opposites, as with a very graphic cunnilingual scene juxtaposed with the Narrator's description of the couple's tearful embraces. The trick in puppet plays is for the audience's initial attraction to the mechanics of the performance to give way to a concern for the characters and their story. So too with Greenspan's *Gonza*. His staging is fascinating, but the devices are essentially distancing; yet, one comes away not simply with an appreciation of his theatrical tricks but with a clear feeling for the duplicitous charm of Gonza and the prim lust of Osai. The actors—Koji Okamura and Mary Schultz—have much to do with this, but their performances are only possible because there is a space left in the artifice for emotion to find a home.

Both the *Ninagawa Macbeth* and Greenspan's *Gonza the Lancer* are reminders that the pleasures of theatricality need not swallow thematic seriousness. It is comforting that such inventive directors chose and remained loyal to plays about the pitfalls of ambition.

GERALD WEALES

MEDIA

GAMES PEOPLE WATCH

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Let us now praise baseball. And if that sounds a little elegiac, it's meant to. By the time this sees print the Cincinnati Reds' stunning World Series victory will be fading from memory, and everybody will have settled down to watching the hibernal cycle of the NFL. By March at least two out of three people you ask won't be able to tell you who won the series. They will all, however, be able to tell you where and how they spent Super Bowl Sunday.

Do I sound bitter? Damn right I do.

Not that I'm saying one game is somehow better than the other. I was never very good at either and, truth to tell, I spend very little of my TV time watching sports at all. But I do spend a lot of time watching the TV altogether, and trying to figure out how what I see there gives hints about the direction of the endangered and listing republic in which you and I live. That's why the fate of baseball bothers me.

The World Series started later than usual this year. It did so because the season had been delayed by the owners' spring lockout, and then because the networks wanted to make sure that the playoff games got maximum—i.e. weekend—coverage; and also because they wanted to make sure that the playoffs didn't conflict with the "NFL Game of the Week" on Monday night, an assured source of astronomical advertising revenue. No problem: Sport, the most ephemeral of human artistic activities, has always relied on other, less ephemeral arts, to preserve its own special radiance. From Pindar to Grantland Rice to Howard Cosell, sports has always required its bard to immortalize its immortals.

But what happens when the bards become more central than the heroes they sing? Or, to put it another way, what happens when a game—an event you *watch*—becomes an "occasion"—an event you *stage*?

Roone Arledge may be the most important single person in the history of athletics: Because Arledge, in the 1960s as director of ABC Sports Broadcasting, understood that the new technology of TV *could* make a game—any game—a staged as opposed to a watched event. By "staged," of course, I don't mean "fixed." Fixing or throwing a game, like, say, the 1919 White Sox, or the LaMotta-Wolcott fight, is an old-fashioned perversion that, in acknowledging the authenticity of the event itself, is almost pure. If you throw the fight, you throw it once and for all. And *that* occurrence, like winning the fight, can never, never be repeated just the same.

No, staging the event, at least in the TV universe, means *preparing* for the event to the degree that *our watching* predominates over *what we watch*. Multiple-camera coverage, directional-mike eavesdropping on the players as they play, smarmy/smart/"expert" commentary on the game from burnt-out jocks in the control booth: all of these, now common details of watching a game, are ways in which the Tube tells you that the event is not just open to you, but *for* you. And all those techniques are the inventions of Roone Arledge, and the Super Bowl, which has to be the most solemnly observed ritual of post-Nixon America, is their culmination, transfiguration, and validation. And what's wrong with that?

Well, nothing, really, until you begin to think about how uncannily close to a Super Bowl—an event for the spectators in which the participants were secondary—was our invasion of Panama and is our current adventure in the Middle East. The president, who has struggled throughout his career with the wimp image, quite naturally wants to establish himself as a jock-type. Problem is, though, that the idea of "jock"—thanks to the very media mavens who built his image in the first place—has been sucked up, etiolated, and freakified to the extent that we can no longer tell whether "hero" in sports means a strong, smart contender, a hypermedicated mutant, or simply the FloJo-style spectacle of the last five minutes. Bad for sports: bad for politics based on a sports metaphor.

And where does this leave baseball? As the first game of the 1990 World Series plays in the other room to No One There,

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having been videotaped—what an image of Reagan/Bush America!—I want to suggest that it leaves baseball a national metaphor, maybe our last national metaphor, for loss. Baseball and TV, I want to suggest, *hate* one another: and baseball loses.

It is, of course, no longer the national pastime. TV football is. Baseball is the national past-time, the sport through which we maintain our last tenuous connection with the small-town, neighborly America that was never really there in the first place. The diamond, Robert Coover wrote in 1969 in *The Universal Baseball Association*, is the true cathedral of America, the place its citizens come to worship their own community. It is the perfect game, played by strong and talented lads who are nevertheless close enough to the human norm to be *ours*. It is self-contained, nine innings of three outs per side, and almost as precisely recordable as the game of games itself, chess. It is infinitely variable and yet radiantly simple: the whole point of the game, said the great owner Bill Veeck, is to see if a running man can move faster than a thrown or hit ball. Its rhythms are slow, majestic, and every TV screen in the world is too large or too small to cover even the multiple tensions of a single pop-up to short right field.

And—here comes the bad news—it was never innocent, never as pure as we needed it to be, and always tinged with the pallor of the Fall.

The game might almost have been invented as an allegory of the pathos of the American experiment: trusting enlightened ambition to play the game fair and win on those terms alone. No one seems to have observed that to ask this is to ask for a nation of heroes. So that the game has always been the acting-out of our frustration at not living up to the challenge of its purity. Football is easier: Break through the line and crush the opposition. Easier, more telegenic, and more Reaganesque.

Which is why, I think, some of the best films of the last few years—*Stealing Home, Eight Men Out, The Natural*, and *Field of Dreams*—have been baseball films and, in a curious way, have been much *better* baseball than the games you see being "really" played on TV. Because it is the *myth* in which we believe, and the myth that impels us to watch it and insist that it *not* be staged. We want to believe in DiMaggio, in Shoeless Joe, in Roy Hobbs, even while we know we finally can't believe in them. All the films I have mentioned—and, I'd guess, all films about baseball made since 1980—are films about failure, loss, and betrayal, and the chances for living with the psychic aftermath of those terrible things. If you can't pray, blaspheme, advised many devotional writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At least in blaspheming you put yourself in a *relationship* to the most high, and having a relationship to the most high is better than having no connection at all. In the same way, these films memorialize the national past-time as a "game"—as opposed to insider trading or the hypocrisies of international oil-jockeying—where *moral choice* was still a viable concept: where "winning" and "losing" still *meant* something. Such movies, like the game they portray, can be taken as a judgment on the decade of politics that generated them. So, as I said, TV wins, and sports becomes increasingly product—as the people who run TV like to say.

FRANK McCONNELL

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Critics' choices for Christmas

Jean Bethke Elshtain

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN *is the Centennial Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University. Her most recent book is* Women and War *(Basic Books). A collection of her essays,* Power Trips and Other Journeys *will soon be published.*

To call Bruce Chatwin's *What Am I Doing Here* (Viking Penguin, $19.95, 367 pp.), and Ian Frazier's *Great Plains* (Penguin, $9.95, 283 pp.), "travel books" is to trivialize or, alternatively, to lift that genre to poignant new heights. Chatwin's latest (and, alas, final) book is a marvel of exploration. Chatwin's persona, happily, always intrudes. He was a modern pilgrim open to the strangeness and wonder, the beauty and horror, around him whether caught up in a coup in a "third-world" country or captured by the rich claustrophobia of the life of a pre-*glasnost* art collector in the Soviet Union. He tracked Yetis, skeptical yet half-believing; he interviewed the rich and famous and the poor and obscure. Insistently, Chatwin tagged his journeys as works of fiction, crafted and composed texts. His books are gems, minus all dross, without a trace of bathos.

Frazier searches knowingly for America, or that America captured in the Great Plains, and comes up with a riveting tale of tragedy, betrayal, high hopes, strong spirits, and wild contradictions. *Great Plains* emerges out of a quintessentially American phenomenon—hit the open road and keep driving until you see the mountains, or reach the ocean, or decide, somehow, to settle—that defies the standard terms of such narratives by offering us history as the present past. His chapter on Crazy Horse is so full of honor and tragedy it will bring tears to all but the coldest hearted—surely none of them readers of *Commonweal*!

The novel which most gripped me and wouldn't let me put it down was Sue Miller's *Family Pictures* (Harper & Row, $24.95, 389 pp.). Miller is on her way to becoming our preeminent observer of post-modern family life in all its perplexing, even nutty, complexity. The bewilderments, mysterious passions, unyielding commitments and terrible betrayals that characterize families are here on display. Miller is never the voyeur; she is the sympathetic chronicler. Through her characters and her female narrator, the Eberhardt family of Chicago lives and breathes and we are inside its being.

Finally, two powerful works by one of the most intriguing public figures of our time, Czechoslovakia's playwright-president, Vaclav Havel. He, remember, is the man who argued that "consciousness precedes being" before the U.S. Congress, a body far more adept at speaking the language of "interest" and "power" than of "living in truth." *Letters to Olga*, (Henry Holt, $16.95, 397 pp.), written under the stringent conditions imposed on Havel as a political prisoner in Husak's Czechoslovakia, is a striking example of the mind of the disciplined ethicist, a dissident who has accepted his fate as a sober (but never self-important) responsibility. Havel managed to turn his letters into a philosophical treatise. He ranges from the most immediate concerns (vitamin pills, fresh oranges) to questions of human identity, for becoming oneself, for sustaining hope, for avoiding cynicism. *Disturbing the Peace* (Knopf, $19.95, 228 pp.), is a memoir conducted through a clandestine interrogation of Havel by a Czech journalist-in-exile in West Germany. We learn more about this remarkable man who sustained through terrible times the significance of the moral act. Life, for Havel, is riddled with paradox. But there remains the evanescent chance that "even a purely moral act that has no hope of any immediate and visible political effect can gradually and indirectly, over time, gain in political significance." It has been a remarkable year and reading these two works helps us to appreciate at least one of the extraordinary human beings who helped to make the events we have witnessed possible.

Jim Sleeper

JIM SLEEPER, *an editorial writer at* New York Newsday, *is the author of* The Closest of Strangers: Liberalism and the Politics of Race in New York *(W.W. Norton).*

Anyone who thinks the floor plan of the French Chamber of Deputies (with its benches on the "left" and "right") remains an adequate diagram for our politics should read three recent books that wade fearlessly into the rubble left by the collapse of the Reagan Revolution and the Berlin Wall. With the help of these writers, the metaphorical Chamber itself may fall next.

Kevin Phillips's excoriation of Reaganism for selling out America's productive capacity in *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath* (Random House, $19.95, 262 pp.) wouldn't be noteworthy had it come from yet another back bencher on the left. But Phillips, prophet of *The Emerging Republican Majority* (his first book), was the architect of Richard Nixon's 1968 presidential victory and a seer to conservatives, until he became appalled by Reagan's effort to

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finance delusions of imperial grandeur by mortgaging our economic destiny to foreign investors.

Phillips is still a capitalist, but he's also a patriot who resents our increasingly rigid inequities between rich and poor, and he's not above calling for strong government fiscal and monetary policies to curb them. How ironic, how refreshing, that just when sclerotic Communist economies are biting the dust, a man with a sure grasp of American political culture rises up to dampen right-wing gloating and tap our finest wellsprings of popular rebellion.

Shelby Steele has spent months since the publication of his *The Content of Our Character: A Vision of Race in America* (St. Martin's Press, $15.95, 175 pp.) denying he's a conservative. As his brilliant rejoinder to a critic in the fall issue of *Dissent* makes clear, Steele, a black essayist and English professor, honors the necessity of collective action against discrimination. But he reminds us that while only groups can pass civil rights laws, only individuals can improve their reading levels or open businesses. And only at their extreme peril can black leaders (and followers) cry "Racism!" as a hedge against moral responsibility and discipline. As I struggled to advance much the same argument with greater political specificity in *The Closest of Strangers*, Steele brought that rarest of gifts to the public arena: a moral compass with an unforgettable voice.

Another brave scrambler of old political categories is Alan Wolfe, a dean at the New School for Social Research and author of *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation* (University of California, $25, 355 pp.). *Commonweal* readers will appreciate Wolfe's analysis of how the private market and the modern state have been gobbling up civil society—that network of religious institutions, neighborhoods, and other communities of faith whose survival depends on an elusive, indispensable trust.

What's exciting about Wolfe's book is his insistence that the traditionally positivist, purportedly "objective" social sciences can and must be suffused with concern for the role of moral obligation in social life. What's challenging and problematic is Wolfe's contention that we can't roll back the clock to embrace the old strictures and scriptures: the market and the rights-based, constitutional state advanced such causes as racial integration and feminism, even as they brought economic and political abuses. It's a complex, invaluable discussion.

Peter Steinfels

PETER STEINFELS *is senior religion correspondent for the* New York Times.

Even if we had access to what will eventually be thirty-one volumes of John Henry Newman's diaries and letters, only a few of us would have the time to read them. Ian Ker's biography—*John Henry Newman* (Oxford, $24.95, 784 pp.)—is the next best thing. It lacks the scope and setting that some biographies provide. Instead, it virtually locks one into Newman's mind, following the course of his life and thought almost day by day. Ker provides sensitive insights into Newman's personality and helpful analyses of his thinking and writing, but it is his extensive selection of Newman's own words that make the book so pleasurable and invaluable.

A fine companion volume, consisting of essential excerpts from Newman's published works, is *Newman the Theologian* (Notre Dame, $9.95, 288 pp.), also introduced and edited by Father Ker.

From the sublime to the ridiculous: *Why Catholics Can't Sing* by Thomas Day (Crossroad, $19.95, 183 pp.) is a biting, irreverent, opinionated assault on the forlorn congregational singing in many or most Catholic parishes and, beyond that, on the state of liturgical renewal in general.

This book has plenty of faults along with its many virtues; my own complaint is that its jaunty tone sometimes resembles the folksy tastelessness that the author exposes in much contemporary hymnody. But how you size up this broadside will depend largely on how you evaluate the current condition of the liturgy. I find that condition not quite as bad as in the days of Father Smith's fifteen-minute Tridentine specials—but almost. The dispirited singing, the trivialization of ritual, the transformation of presiders into emcees, as Day says, signals "a religious, social, and cultural breakdown of astounding proportions."

Even more astounding is that so many of those who should be unflinchingly diagnosing this situation are occupied, like the worst kind of conservatives, in dismissing criticism and protecting their psychological stake in post-Vatican II developments. If Day's firecracker makes a lot of us jump, good.

In *Under God: Religion and American Politics* (Simon and Schuster, $24.95, 445 pp.), Garry Wills serves up one brilliant set piece after another—on Gary Hart's desperate attempts to invent a new moral language to justify his marital infidelity; on the invincible secularity of Michael Dukakis and his handlers ("God was not in their computer"); on the Scopes trial; on Jesse Jackson and Lincoln's "black theology"; on *Lolita* and a "theology of erotica." Wills seems to promise a Grand Theory about religion and politics that ultimately isn't there. But as a reporter on religion I kept thinking how much easier my job would be if everyone read this book.

John L. Esposito's *Islam: The Straight Path* (Oxford, $19.95, 272 pp.) is an introduction that is more than an introduction. It deftly synthesizes a great deal of faith with a critical "outside" view, and ranges from Islam's formative history and the developed forms of its beliefs and practices to the shifting fortunes of its modern revivals.

Anyone who could possibly agree with everything Andrew M. Greeley says in *The Catholic Myth: The Behavior and Beliefs of American Catholics* (Scribner's,

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$21.95, 309 pp.) must be incapable of critical thought. But anyone who doesn't find this one of the last decade's most useful and stimulating books on American Catholicism must be incapable of thought altogether. If you can't stand the brawling, stay out of the barroom. If you can, it's more than worth the wild punches and occasional bloody nose.

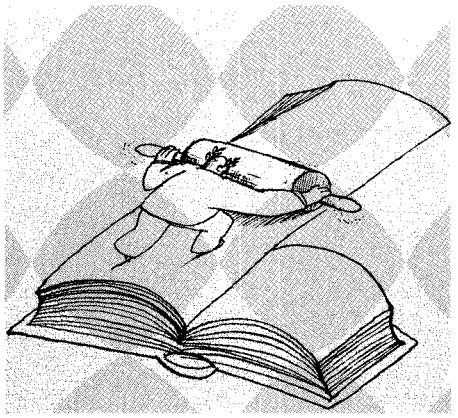
There has been no better interpreter in English of Eastern Europe's miseries and glories than Timothy Garton Ash. His reports for the *Spectator* in England and the *New York Review of Books* have been essential reading, and lose none of their power in the two collections, *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe* (Random House, $19.95, 335 pp.) and *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89* (Random House, $17.95, 156 pp.).

Finally, although it is unquestionably trying to be married to someone madly in love with Vaclav Havel, I must include in this list the Czech prisoner-playwright-president's *Letters to Olga* (Henry Holt Owl paperback, $16.95, 397 pp.) and *Disturbing the Peace* (Knopf, $19.95, 228 pp.), both translated by Paul Wilson.

Karen Sue Smith

KAREN SUE SMITH, *a former associate editor of* Commonweal, *is the editor of* Church *magazine.*

After choosing a stack of possible books for a flight to New York, I decided to buy *All in the Day's Work* by Ida M. Tarbell (G.K. Hall & Co., $8.95, 412 pp.). Jackpot! Tarbell wrote her autobiography in 1938 at the age of eighty-one. The book is packed with historical accounts, including the aftereffects of the Civil War, the laying of the railroads, the growth of Wall Street, World War I, the League of Nations, and the world on the brink of World War II. Lesser known events such as the Chautauqua movement and the history of several now defunct magazines—*Scribner's* and *McClure's*—are equally engrossing. While Tarbell is best known for her exposé of the Standard Oil



Company and her writings on Lincoln, it is her personal integrity as a rather private woman in public life and as a journalist that impresses me. Both the palpable concern for the common good and the civility evident in the book make a reader mourn for what our society has lost so quickly.

Kevin Phillips's *The Politics of Rich and Poor* (Random House, $19.95, 262 pp.) is essential reading. For those of us who felt like Cassandras of economic doom during the Reagan years, Phillips, an advisor to former president Nixon, has gathered overwhelming data to plot the growing gap between rich and poor. His encouraging thesis is that the time is ripe for political change.

The Broken Cord: A Family's Ongoing Struggle with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome by Michael Dorris (Harper & Row, $18.95, 300 pp.) is the most moving book I read all year. Written by a father about his adopted son, this award-winning book has scenes of warm humor (baking a train-shaped birthday cake for the day care center) and parental delight as well as ultimate tragedy. Two warnings: skip the introduction until after you've read the book; if you get bogged down midway by the syndrome information, jump toward the end, reading especially the final chapter, Adam's story.

The History of American Catholic Women by James K. Kenneally (Crossroad, $24.95, 286 pp.) is a quick and delightful read by a feminist historian with a sense of fair play. The cast of historical characters is representative of women in literature, politics, church, and cultural affairs. Several individuals are particularly well drawn, including one or two opposed to the actions of the organized women's movement.

Although *The Bible and Us: A Priest and a Rabbi Read Scripture Together* by Andrew M. Greeley and Jacob Neusner (Warner Books, $24.95, 288 pp.) is not exactly the debate its authors promise (they tend to bypass each other's arguments), it still makes fascinating reading. Those familiar with Greeley's central theme of God as lover of humanity will find Neusner's way of explaining a text, such as the near sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, and his way of looking at biblical figures refreshingly different from the Catholic view. Also, Neusner's approach to faith is consistently mature. While the idea of a dialogue book is not unique, at this level of discourse it is rare.

No Turning Back: Two Nuns' Battle with the Vatican over Women's Right to Choose by Barbara Ferraro and Patricia Hussey, with Jane O'Reilly (Poseidon Press, $19.95, 332 pp.) is lively reading, tinged with a kind of righteous indignation. It is important less as a vindication of the authors than as a public record of dealings within a religious community and with the Vatican; it documents the type of radical personal change experienced by many women religious after the sixties.

Richard John Neuhaus

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS *is editor-in-chief of* First Things, *a monthly journal of religion and public life.*

Real Presences by George Steiner (Chicago, $19.95, 236 pp.) is a thick, rich, demanding, and immensely rewarding reflection on the nature of language, beauty, and truth. This is about as powerful an answer to the deconstructionists and other epigones of Nietzsche as any available. Since most people who review serious books are paid to engage in the "elevated chit chat" that Steiner so devastatingly critiques, *Real Presences* has not received the careful attention it deserves. [See, however, Robert P. Imbelli's review in *Commonweal*, November 3, 1989—The Editors.]

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Charles Taylor of McGill provides what I believe to be one of the most seminal works in moral philosophy to appear in years. *Sources of the Self* (Harvard, $37.50, 608 pp.) is a sweepingly ambitious examination of the history of ideas about the self that used to be the soul. The treatments of Augustine's understanding of the "reflexive self" and of Romanticism's kinship with current nihilisms are not to be missed. Gracefully written, this is a splendid read that brings one, after almost six-hundred pages, to the edge of the inescapable question of God. *Sources of the Self* is so good that one hopes Mr. Taylor knows he has obligated himself to continue the argument.

Hans Urs von Balthasar's *The Glory of the Lord* (Crossroad/Ignatius), as the late thinker insisted, is not an aesthetic theology but a theology of aesthetics. Nonetheless, it is beautiful thinking about beauty, inviting contemplation as much as cogitation. Of the three transcendentals—the good, the true, and the beautiful—Balthasar convincingly argues that the last has been unjustly neglected. It was not always so, as he magnificently demonstrates by drawing on his luxuriant acquaintance with patristic and medieval thought. For readers hungry for *theologia*, this is the real stuff, thinking with God about God.

With all the talk about the forthcoming guidelines for a universal catechism, why hasn't *The Church's Confession of Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Ignatius, $14.95, 380 pp.) received more attention? Largely written by Walter Kasper, and endorsed by the German bishops' conference and the Vatican, this catechism engages the intelligent searcher in a manner that has thoroughly internalized the dialectic between Rome and the Reformation traditions. For the literate layperson and, I expect, for many clergy, there is not currently available a more accessible, comprehensive, and persuasive presentation of the faith.

The superb PBS series on the Civil War prompted me to go back to James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom* (Oxford, $35, 928 pp.). Is there, all in all, a better telling of the story that is at the heart of our national self-understanding? I don't claim to be an expert on the subject but, if there is, I don't know about it.

Raymond A. Schroth

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J., *author of* Books for Believers *(Paulist Press), is a professor of communications at Loyola University of New Orleans.*

The writer "should have read everything," Ernest Hemingway told the young man in 1933 who had hitch-hiked from Minnesota to his Key West front door to ask for the master's advice, "so he knows what he has to beat." Creator as contender—in the ring duking it out with C. P. Snow, Mary McCarthy, and David Lodge.

So, as I spent summer mornings sweating out the first chapters of my own novel —set at a small Catholic college somewhere equidistant between Des Moines, Cleveland, and St. Louis, where a fading religious order, the Society of Saint Jude, is foundering in its search for direction—I spent the afternoons reading novels and tracts about universities and priests. To see what I "had to beat."

Meanwhile, at my own university, our college dean has resigned, and the faculty now look at one another differently as their eyes meet at the mailboxes, sizing one another up for deanly qualities or aspirations. In C. P. Snow's *The Masters*, the faculty of an English college discover that their dean is dying of cancer before the poor fellow knows it himself and begin jockeying for his chair not only before the corpse is cold but before it is even a corpse.

In my own first draft, my dean is a weak man—an innovative leader in his first year who has made himself a mere caretaker in his fifth, rather than tempt the faculty to batter him to death. Perhaps if he could have read Henry Rosovsky's *The University: An Owner's Manual* (W. W. Norton, $19.95, 308 pp.) he would have approached his job more realistically. After eleven years as dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University, Rosovsky now shares his how-to secrets, including: learn the value of being vague,

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do not separate yourself from the community, and avoid doing anything that you would not wish to see published in a newspaper.

Frankly elitist in his insistence on top-down decision making and on giving the strongest say to professors with the longest tenure and most knowledge, his strongest message is on the necessary connection between teaching excellence and "by far the healthiest and most efficient method of fighting burnout"—research. He also knows that "great" professors are not always nice persons and that faculty are often irresponsible, childish, eaten alive by their own delusions, bitterness, and envy. And though he has written an unabashedly positive book, he also concludes what the guiding spirits of all the Catholic colleges are slow to grant—that "the relation between character and education is weak." Remember that many Nazis read the right books and the Japanese pilots who bombed Pearl Harbor would have had high SATs.

The priests at my St. Jude's College are either struggling with celibacy or have repressed the issue. I reviewed recently for *New York Newsday* three superb books on priests and holiness: Paul Wilkes's *In Mysterious Ways* (Random House, $19.95, 233 pp), an expansion of his beautiful *New Yorker* portrait of Boston's Father Joe Greer; David Rice's *Shattered Vows: Priests Who Leave* (William Morrow, $18.95, 288 pp.); and Kenneth L. Woodward's *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn't, and Why* (Simon and Schuster, $21.95, 438 pp.), which every priest, religious and seminarian should read as an insightful history of Western spirituality. Of the three, *Shattered Vows* is the most likely to be overlooked.

Yet, Rice, an Irish ex-Dominican priest, has studied the latest research, interviewed over 500 people, including 442 former priests in twenty countries, traced the history of celibacy, and told some appalling tales of men abused and broken by religious superiors, of excruciating loneliness, of double-life priests who exploit women and abandon them, of third-world countries where the great majority of priests keep women on the side and father children. From all this, Rice has written a compassionate and rational critique, rather than an angry and sensational report.

The eighty-five-year-old activist, writer, and irritant, George H. Dunne, S.J., must have been so sure that religious superiors would never let him publish his memoirs, *King's Pawn* (Loyola University Press, $19.95, 502 pp.), where he actually names the Jesuit authorities who have treated him badly, that he must still be waiting for an ominous knock on his infirmary door at Loyola-Marymount in Los Angeles.

In 1932, caught unwittingly in some internal Jesuit politics in China, he was yanked home. In 1945, when he stood up to the president of St. Louis University who was putting the brakes on the university's racial integration, Dunne was bounced out. In Hollywood, when he spoke up for the Conference of Studio Unions and took on Ronald Reagan and the Screen Actors Guild, as Reagan tells it, "someone else began to teach political science (at Loyola) and he was on the other side of the country."

Now Dunne is back at Loyola. My novel needs a moral center, an old fighter whose bruises have given him authority. Would that my book—or my life—could achieve as much as his.

Susan Cahill

SUSAN CAHILL, *author of the novel* Earth Angels *and editor of the* Women & Fiction *series, teaches English in New York City.*

Uta Ranke-Heinemann's *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven: Women, Sexuality, and the Catholic Church* (Doubleday, $21.95, 360 pp.) is a scholarly study of the hierarchical Catholic church's politics of sexuality, women, and celibacy that engages this complex territory with a historical eye, a clear style, and not a few jokes. The author, a German theologian and professor of theology and the history of religion at the University of Essen, refuses to take seriously what should not be taken seriously: the centuries of patristic, scholastic, and papal pronouncements about the nature of woman, the dangers of sexual pleasure, the ideal of virginity, the lesser status of marriage. Embedded in this traditional bachelor-boy theology are errors of fact engendering odd and oppressive practices; the "churching" of women after childbirth, for instance, follows from a conception of impregnation as defilement, birth as animalistic, the afterbirth itself as *sordes* (filth), and maternity, according to one German theologian, as a sign of the curse of original sin. Celibate theologians cooked up the erroneous casuistry surrounding contraception with an eye on woman's libido, highest, according to an apologist for *Humanae vitae*, during her fertile days, though science has shifted the fertile phase since Soranus of Ephesus—a second-century physician and the most important source of knowledge about contraception for the Roman Empire and for medieval Europe—clocked libido's peak as immediately after menstruation. Errors of biology as well as misreadings and mistranslations of Scripture abound in these sexual dogmatics, and though much of the mythology about a woman's body strikes an American woman in 1990 as comical, Heinemann does not trivialize the damage. Catholic moral theology, she concludes, is today "facing the ash heap. It is a folly that poses as religion and invokes the name of God, but has distorted the consciences of countless people."

One of the most impoverishing consequences of this problematic historicization of sexual morality was the loss of the Jewish heritage of sexual health:

> As theology increasingly became the business of bachelors, sin was more and more placed in the realm of sex. With the growth of its sexual neurosis,...Christianity distanced itself from its Jewish roots in the Old Testament and from Jewish life in general. Virginal Christianity condemned carnal Judaism.

Within Mariology—the author calls it "anti-Mariology"—the Jewish woman Miriam has been driven underground and replaced with the sexless, shadowy, blond Madonna.

The book inscribes a detailed and exhaustively documented record of historical heresy—in the area of sexuality, Christianity embraced rather than repudiated certain aspects of Gnosticism and Manichaeism. It reminds the reader of what religion is not. Authentic religion and earth-

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iness, the author insists, make good bedfellows, especially at Christmas, the double celebration of motherhood and childbirth.

The radiant sanity and vision of the Catholic church's authentic tradition suffuse the second volume of *Peacemaking: Day by Day* (Pax Christi, $5, 149 pp.). The brief texts for each day of the year reflect a global richness that makes this small book wonderfully appropriate for the birthday of the Prince of Peace. The wisdom of Ram Dass, for instance, inscribes the same page as the words of St. Paul, Thoreau, and Jim Wallis. It helps to read the poetic and mystical beauty of St. Augustine's language on a subject having nothing to do with sex. In the present atmosphere of fear of another war to burn out the twentieth century, it is good to read Julia Ward Howe's antiwar original Mother's Day Proclamation of 1870: Hallmark wouldn't touch it.

Teaching members of academic communities at all levels—as well as parents—will bless the makers of *No Place But Here: A Teacher's Vocation in a Rural Community* by Garret Keizer (Viking Penguin, $6.95, 164 pp.). Keizer teaches high school English and lives in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, a paradisial landscape for tourists, an impoverished back-o-beyond for many native families of farmers and factory workers. Not surprisingly, Keizer is also a lay Episcopal minister: a sacramental sense of his students' worth and their world animates his prose—"what we see that's precious beyond all conceiving." He loves literature as much as he does teaching and he's good, you can tell, at both. His classroom anecdotes reveal his wit and common sense: all moves with the appropriate rhythm—hard and driving at times, especially at the end of the chapter, "The Gospel of Unfairness," which concerns a class of "losers"—remedial English—producing the school newspaper, with excellence and by deadline. My favorite chapter, "Souls in Prison," is as relevant to urban teachers as to rural communities. It addresses the actual context of contemporary education-in-crisis:

> We in education talk all the time about how we "care about kids." We speak with the maudlin fraternity of drunks about how much we "care about kids." But care that does not seek to be effectual is dishonest and cheap. I am convinced that we cannot care about kids without caring about the economic, social, and political world from which they come and to which they go.

The chapter on school discipline, entitled "Courtesy," begins with a quote about the "exquisite courtesy" of God from Dame Julian of Norwich; the chapter "Parents" begins with a poem by Sappho: "I have a small/daughter called/Cleis...." Because Keizer has a poet's eye for precise and odd detail, the humanity of this book is firm. The best book I have read about teaching (and parents and children) in a decade, *No Place But Here* is a compelling and compassionate literary treasure.

Margaret Wimsatt

MARGARET WIMSATT, *a frequent reviewer for* Commonweal, *teaches at Yale University and the University of New Mexico.*

Anthony Hecht's new collection, *The Transparent Man* (Knopf, $18.95, 75 pp.), has an elegiac tone even when the poems are not openly memorial, reminding the reader in their musicality of T.S. Eliot and Yeats. At its center are two long poems. "See Naples and Die," describing the breakup of a marriage:

> Marriages come to grief in many ways./Our own was, I suppose, a common one, /Without dramatics, a slow stiffening....

does indeed carry the sense of time, long times, deteriorating. It begins with a sunny Neopolitan day in April and ends on "a vacant wilderness of weeds" called the Elysian Fields. The elegiac tone is broken occasionally by comic or plain touristic episodes—the money lost to a swindler, the artistic arrangement of seafood on a platter, and a terrifying reconstruction of the devastating eruption of Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii, as described by the elder Pliny. "A Love for Four Voices," the other central piece, has the lovers of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" represented

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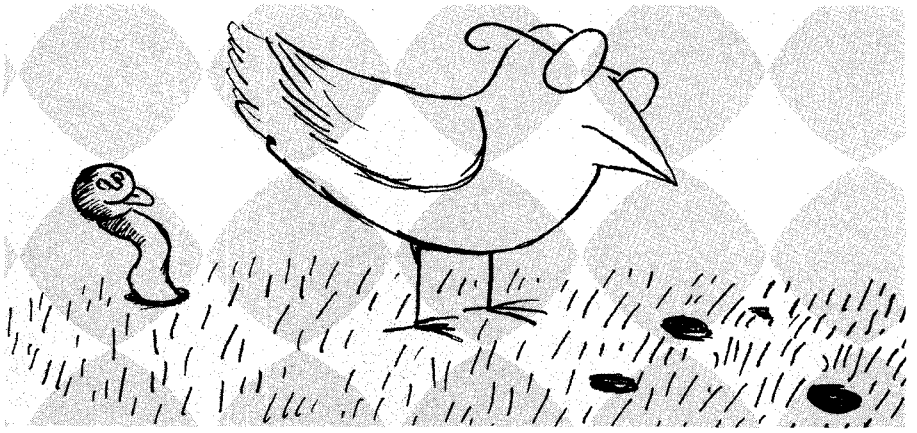
by a string quartet, with a subtitle referring to Haydn. The musical structure is correct, and the poetry is witty and graceful, but their combination may puzzle the reader.

Many of the shorter poems *are* memorial, and all are aware of history. The title piece proposes a novel view of the human anatomy; "The Book of Yolek" recaptures the human cruelty Hecht has poetized so horrifyingly before; the last, "Murmur," is elegant—and sad.

Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama (HarperCollins, $22.95, 288 pp.) reveals a life lived in two worlds, one practical, workaday, the other mystical. Tibet's Dalai Lama seems competent in both, though happier in the second. He bears the responsibility of being both a deeply spiritual religious leader (Buddhist), and the temporal head of a ravaged country. Chosen at the age of three to be the fourteenth Dalai Lama, at a time when China was already invading Tibet's borders, he spent five of his teenage years under the wing of Chairman Mao, only to return to Tibet and find it abused and overrun by its enormous eastern neighbor. Reluctantly,



he decided he could do more for his people by leaving for the outside world. Various leaders of India have supported the establishment of Tibetan refuges on their subcontinent. There are now major Tibetan settlements there where, after enormous difficulties (the climate being one), these immigrants live something of a normal life, schools and hospitals having been established, and new ways of farming learned.

For this reader, the story of the struggle is the most engrossing part of the book. In later years the author has become a public figure, visiting the pope, the archbishop of Canterbury, Mother Teresa—even speaking to our own Congress in 1987— winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. These honors have not changed his outlook. For him, the Buddhist religion, though capable of having friendly relations with other religions, is indeed the ground of his life.

There is irony in the fact that Willa Cather, the most private of writers, where her personal life is concerned, should after her death have prompted such a string of biographies. She maintained that anything worth knowing about her could be found in her books, and did her best to have her letters destroyed. But a great many of them survived, in libraries from Harvard to the Huntington, and have been worked over by the authors of many books and articles. Their value varies. The latest is *Willa Cather: Double Vision* (Pantheon, $29.95, 410 pp.), by an Englishwoman, Hermione Lee, who teaches at the University of York and has also written on Elizabeth Bowen and Virginia Woolf. This book should be the last, unless some astonishing new cache turns up; it deserves to be. Perhaps because she is a visitor here, she has managed to see the whole picture, without feeling impelled to push any particular theorem. While not neglecting biography, she has put her emphasis on the work, illuminating a number of facets we had not much noticed before. She is particularly strong on the dark novels: *A Lost Lady, The Professor's House*, and *My Mortal Enemy*, but the whole book is intelligent and careful. It is a pleasure to find so sensitive a critic with no Catherian axe to grind.

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John W. Cook

JOHN W. COOK *is professor of religion and the arts at Yale Divinity School, and director of the Yale Institute of Sacred Music.*

A modern story of a descent into hell, meticulously tracing the pilgrimage of a great victor-liberator, is braided together by Gabriel García Márquez in *The General in His Labyrinth* (Knopf, $19.95, 285 pp.). Márquez's story follows Simón Bolívar at the end of his life on a tortuous journey down the Magdalena River to the sea in 1830. The heights of his astonishing military career and the tragic despondency of his last days are vividly imagined. Bolívar's memories, triggered by events and faces, leave the reader suspended between biography and metaphors of meaning.

It is to Márquez's great credit that the story is not simply a tragedy broken with flashbacks. It is about the pain of an abused and dying body, the pain of victory remembered, and a consciousness of unrelieved suffering that recreates the universe in its own image. Bolívar's "radiance of great-

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ness" is smothered in despair. His hope to achieve one nation in South America is dashed as he emerges in the last days as a naked general on a journey to nowhere. He is the liberator who, following his political crucifixion, descends into hell, not to redeem or free it and be resurrected to glory, but to face oblivion. The general's entrance into Cartagena reads like a view into a hell-mouth conjured by Hieronymous Bosch. The scene is strewn with pilgrims plodding like ants toward a shrine, above the stench of swamps filled with the bilge of the slaughterhouse, and at the center hangs the burned carcass of a mad dog.

What underlies the horror of the story and makes it such a good book is the human dream and crippled nobility of the characters. The combination of tenacity and defeat is unrelieved, and age and suffering are seen as the measure of life.

Márquez does not simply create another epic of an anti-hero. Quite the contrary. He unmasks the demise of a genuine hero, all of whose laurels have been taken away. The hero's poignant humanity remains in spite, or perhaps because of it all.

Márquez's portrait of Bolívar is especially interesting in relation to the double themes of Willard Gaylin's *Adam and Eve and Pinocchio: On Being and Becoming Human* (Viking Penguin, $18.95, 292 pp.). A psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Gaylin extracts a moral thesis from the two stories named in the title. His method engages us in a careful and surprisingly refreshing reading of the Genesis account and the story of the puppet who became a boy. Genesis establishes for Gaylin the norm of what it means to be human, while *Pinocchio* suggests how it is that one becomes human. Gaylin walks the reader through many dimensions of contemporary behaviorist and psychoanalytic thought, and he writes with candor and compassion. His moral fervor animates a compelling point of view. Human beings are not just a higher order of the animal kingdom, and not angels of the heavenly kingdom, but "something special." He fiercely counters psychic determinism and stresses "the magnificent potential of the human being to become something between animal and God."

Adam and Eve illuminate the birth of morality, and Gaylin can write about the Fall as though it were a victory. In *Pinocchio*, the development of human consciousness is explored.

"Where Genesis clarifies our natural endowment, *Pinocchio* explores how development influences the expression of those potentials." Human beings are moral agents who make choices, live in community, and risk loving. Radical individuality is, among other things, anti-human.

While Gaylin does not profess to be a religious person, his metaphors and perspective reflect religious teachings, and he finds in the Bible a rich resource of wisdom and moral truths with which to counter the pervasive cynicism and determinism of this age.

The topic of Michael Camille's *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge University, $59, 448 pp.) is idolatry. This examination of art and idolatry in Europe has interesting parallels with Márquez's fallen idol and Gaylin's false idols. While Camille studies images and anti-images of the Gothic era, his thesis extends to observations of the Renaissance, Reformation, and "post-Modernity." He begins by discussing idols of the pagans, the Saracens, and the Jews, before moving on to the church and medieval culture. Through art (primarily illuminated manuscripts, stained-glass windows, and low-relief carving), Camille reveals "a culture in which the visible was still tied to the supernatural and consequently more powerful than it is even in today's image-saturated culture."

The Gothic Idol is packed with illustrations, many of which are relatively unknown and previously unpublished. The commentary and visual sources provide the reader with a unique view into another culture and another time, but one that continues to influence and resonate in our world of imagery today. For all who are interested in the role of art and imagery in any age, this book offers a wealth of information and insight. "Idolatry is once again a vital theoretical issue in today's Western culture supersaturated with representations," Camille writes. We are still engaged in the "beautiful but terrible tyranny" of the never-ending juxtaposition of faith and image making.

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 706)

implies that the interpreter has accommodated things pretty much to her/his own wishes. Paul E. Dinter, I fear, is guilty of eisegesis in his article.

One wonders if any words of the Gospel have prompted Christians to follow the Lord Jesus in a very special way more than the words of Matthew 19:12: "There are eunuchs born so from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs made so by human agency, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can" (*The New Jerusalem Bible*).

Is one now to believe that priests and consecrated virgins who have gone before us were dupes, and that the Lord Jesus meant his words only for certain centuries? Or may one recognize that there are special invitations in the Gospel that prompt believers in any age to follow the Lord in a certain way?

Ultimately, the question involves the kingdom: Is God's revelation a reality, and does the invitation of the Lord Jesus in the kingdom continue to exist in the twentieth century? Did Jesus envision that all those who followed him in a certain way would be labeled disabled in the sense in which Dinter has employed that term?

Discussions on the matter of celibacy are certainly welcome, but not when the words of the Gospel are distorted.

MARTIN J. BURNE, O.S.B.

Freud as villain

North Easton, Mass.

To the Editors: With respect to the article by Paul Dinter, I offer these observations:

1. Is Dinter advocating that Catholics now dismiss as inappropriate for modern times that counsel of the tradition which from Christian time immemorial has exalted virginity and celibacy? However essential his analysis of Matthew, Dinter risks suggesting that revelation ends with New Testament understanding. If the tradition has facility at anything, it is at welcoming new views and then sustaining them in a fruitful balance against differing ones. To uphold, as the tradition has, that chastity is the way of perfection is not to exclude other ways of perfection as well. Agreed: It is a tragedy of the tradition that no spirituality comparable to the one which served vowed chastity developed for vowed marriage. But the Holy Ghost is not confined to the recitals of geometry. Two objects—chastity and marriage—can occupy the same space. Without contradiction, both can be ways of perfection.

2. Contrary to Dinter, I believe the church is thinking about celibacy. As is its wont, however, it keeps its own counsel. Maybe waiting for the modern world to blow over, the church is reluctant to discard a feature of ordained ministry which has been so stabilizing to it because of a (momentary?) lull. Of course, from almost any point of view, waiting for the modern world to blow over is like a disheartened 1940s radio announcer waiting for TV to blow over....

3. At this time, the church is unwilling to ordain married men to the priesthood. I offer three reasons: (1) Very shortly after the first married priest is minted, the first divorced priest will be negotiating an alimony agreement through his attorney; (2) the restoration of high numbers of priests that a married clergy would accomplish would replicate the aberration of times past in which ordained priesthood became an omnivore, devouring every ministry in sight; (3) if women who serve full-time in positions of pastoral ministry are rightly frustrated when part-time deacons, because of ordination, enjoy definition to their ministry which women are denied, a caste of married part-time priests alongside a full-time ministry of unordained women would be an injustice far more aggravating.

4. If celibacy for diocesan priests is a pitiable state, the cause perhaps is not as much celibacy as it is depressing rectory culture. In the boarding house/office building rectory, a celibate's own frustrations become magnified by close, unrelieved association with others serving the same life sentence of house arrest. Imagine nurses living off hospital wards, teachers near classrooms, troopers in state police barracks, or judges in the warrens of a courthouse. Too often the diocesan priest lives for the day each week when the ubiquitous white plastic tab at his neck can be laid

aside, for the house on the shore, for the ski vacation. It is rectory living, not celibacy, that dehumanizes and causes havoc; it can trivialize the commitment to celibacy. Diocesan priests would have more effective ministries and more faithful celibate lives, I believe, if they could live in their own homes, or, if they so chose, in some challenging supportive community. Can a compromise be struck with the pope? If we all agree to celibacy, will he agree to blow up all rectories?

5. Just for the record: Not every person called to celibacy is required to be a priest or religious. The Roman Ritual includes a little-used Rite for the Consecration of Virgins Living in the World. As candidates, the church contemplates those called to celibacy but not to membership in a religious congregation. This expression of celibate life has long standing in the tradition. Not monk or cleric, St. Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373) was a *yhydy*, the Syriac word for "solitary." As such, Ephrem witnessed to Christ, the only-begotten or "solitary" one of God. Blessed Julian of Norwich (d. 1413) is only the most famous of an untold number of anchoresses who within the happy seclusion of church walls lived lives of devotion and prayer, freed of the constraints of family and religious community. Though Santa Rosa de Lima (d. 1617) dressed in a Dominican habit, she was not a nun. While living at home, Rosa sold the beautiful roses of Lima to support herself and her many beautiful penances.

These examples illustrate the flexibility regarding the living out of celibacy within the tradition. Given our society's obsession with sexual fulfillment, perhaps this independent expression of the charism—a charism still, so to speak, on the books—might well be revitalized. The challenge for the church is to be imaginative in sup-

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porting forms celibacy might assume today. Through the tradition's suppleness and strength, we can enter the future, if we are courageous. If we are afraid, we can use the tradition as a barricade against the modern world. Dinter's article holds the promise of the former; it also describes the tragedy of the latter.

6. Though Dinter wrote on celibacy, all he said could well have been applied to marriage, too. While reading Dinter, I felt as I did while watching Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited.* Isn't his essay a social history of decline? The culprit who began this process—and Dinter invokes his name at one point—is Freud. The villainy that Freud and his revolution effected includes these persuasions: Our ultimate goal is personal happiness rather than duty; the individual is more important than the community; whenever there is a choice, the private realm is to be enhanced over the common realm.

Two benighted modern dogmas ensue. Dogma One: We are first to seek for marriage someone with whom we are in love, not first someone to whom we are suited in the long haul. Though it is anathema even to breathe it, I wonder if arranged marriages of the past were so objectionable after all? Dogma Two: Priests, like married people, are entitled to be happy in their ministry and in their personal lives. If we are determined to propose a measure for all things, I ask, must that measure be personal happiness? What about duty? Perseverance? Faithfulness?

RICHARD MAZZIOTTA, C.S.C.

Missing factors

Fruita, Colo.

To the Editors: Though it makes some incisive and accurate points, Paul Dinter's article omits several considerations that might have made a more balanced presentation, among them:

The figure of Christ as initial motivator to imitation and sustaining example in moments of nail-biting crisis;

The history of abstention from sexual activity by liturgical representatives of both Old and New Testaments, and the consequent influence of this upon the emerging practice of celibacy in our fifth century;

And the general laws of psychology as these apply to choice.

Some reflection on these factors might have helped Dinter bring added vision and balance to his worthwhile and very necessary effort.

REV. JOHN KIERNAN

The author replies:

Whatever the value of celibacy in itself, "Disabled for the Kingdom" cited how problematic it has become as *mandatory* for those in ordained ministry. Understood otherwise, I wish to offer some clarifications and response on Scripture, tradition, and the presumed "villainy" of Sigmund Freud. Accused of "*eisegesis*" and accommodating a passage of Scripture [Burne], I can only point out that Catholic *exegetes* long before me (J. Dupont [1959], Q. Quesnell [1968]) argued that the text did not originally refer to a call to virginity or nonmarital celibacy. If the word of God in Matt. 19:12 has been accommodated, it has been done by the hierarchy, not by this author. Any expectation that revelation through the words of Scripture somehow rides above the tide of history and escapes cultural or ecclesiastical conditioning is a fundamentalist, not a Catholic, perspective.

Neither do I suggest "that revelation ends with New Testament understanding," nor that the tradition [small "t"] which "exalted virginity and celibacy" [Mazziotta] is anything but fallible. Essential to the Catholic tradition's "suppleness and strength" is its ability to correct itself and understand the content of revelation less inadequately. This is clearly the case with our understanding of John 3:3 ("Amen, Amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above," cf. v 5) by which we no longer consign the unbaptized to hell when they die, as we once did. It is a *literal* reading of Matt. 19:12 that uncovers how distorted the text is when interpreted as exalting celibacy or virginity!

If we would be honest, we would not be so rash to condemn "our society's obsession with sexual fulfillment" without confessing our church's equally obsessive denial that sexual fulfillment represents a healthy natural "end" of a unique human capacity, i.e., nonreproductive sexual love. Sadly, I find Father Mazziotta's mockery of modern love marriages to be misogynist (because women never are treated as full human beings in arranged marriages) and his disparaging of personal happiness as a goal for priests to be misanthropic (because a lot of clerical illness has been cloaked in the guise of sacrificing personal happiness for "duty" or even "faithfulness"—to the detriment of the members of Christ's body being abused by sick priests).

His strident notice of splinters in the eyes of diocesan priests occurs at the price of overlooking beam-like offenses among his own vowed brethren. In sum, there are more grievous "culprits" than Dr. Freud who, for all his theoretical exaggerations and personal failures, taught us something about personal motivation, a lesson our cleric-ridden church has yet to internalize.

REV. PAUL E. DINTER

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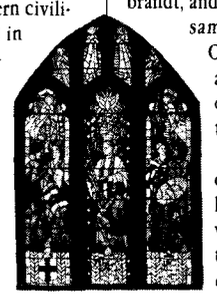

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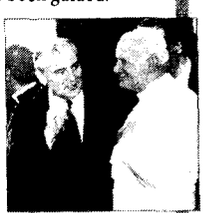

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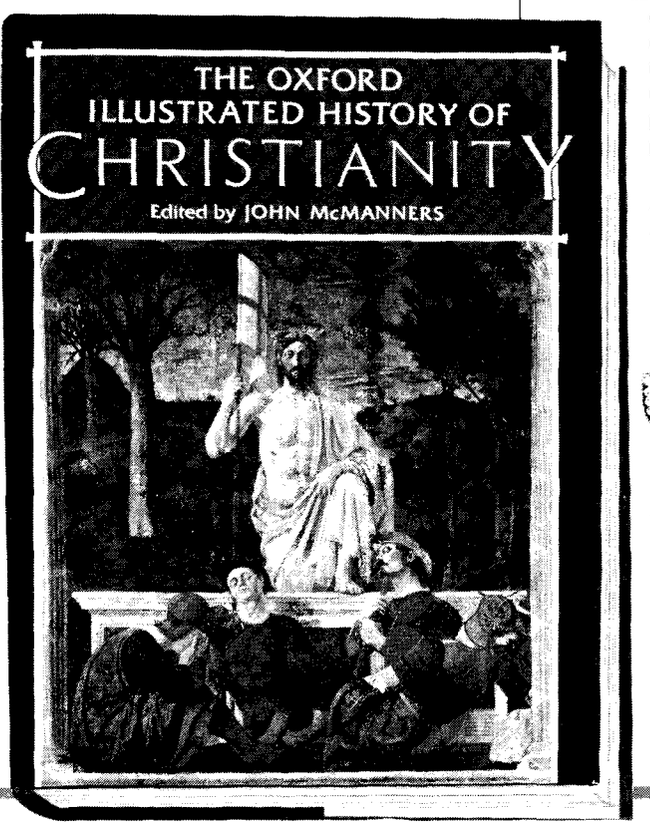

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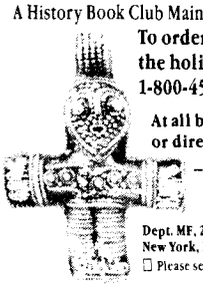

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